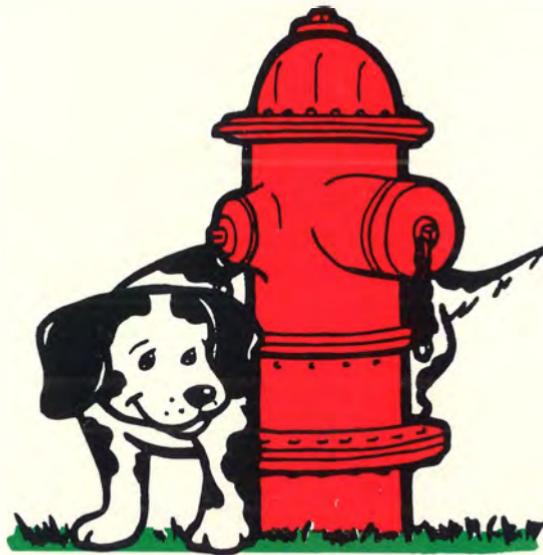


# " DOC, DON'T TELL ANYONE."



By Carl T Baker, DVM





"DOC, DON'T TELL ANYONE"

By Carl T. Baker, D.V.M.

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DOC

DON'T TELL

ANYONE

The Goofy Things That Have Happened To This  
Veterinarian Over My Thirty-Plus Year Career

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## INTRODUCTION

'DOC...DON'T TELL ANYONE' is the written version of the 'goofy' things that have happened to me over my thirty-plus year career in veterinary medicine. I've changed the names of the story characters to allow them to keep 'The Dumb Embarrassing Thing I Did Today' hidden away in their very private memories.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

The illustrator, Gary Lapelle, responded to my request to read these stories and give me his artistic impressions. Gary's love for animals, people, and his sense of humor comes forth in each of his illustrations.

Take a few minutes from your reading and enjoy Gary's illustrations.

## THANK YOU

Over the years it has taken me to write this book I've infringed on family, friends, and anyone that would listen to me spout off about my book. I owe a great deal to all those people. A simple thank you doesn't seem adequate for the size of my personal debt. I've concluded the only appropriate way to thank all these people is to thank the Lord for giving me my wife, Barbara. Barbara, with the Lord's help, has made my life have some value to family and friends. Thank you family and friends, but

THANK YOU, LORD, FOR BARBARA!

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**FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**BY THE AUTHOR**

Dear Reader:

F.Y.I.

I am taking these few pages of my first book for a self introduction in a mini-autobiographical form. Unorthodox as this is, it's the only way I know of to do a written self introduction. I'm hoping you will learn where this guy comes from who writes the 'goofy', the real, the humorous, and the unseen side of a rural veterinarian. The book is all inclusive from the time I chose veterinary medicine for my profession to the present. I'll not bare my soul for the world to see my innards, but give a few relevant facts, allowing you a glimpse into what got me from there to here.

I am a sixty-three year old hillside farm boy with enough education to legally administer medical help to animals.

How's that for a short description???

I am the fifth child in the family of seven children of the late Thomas and Katie Baker. I am the only one of the seven children who chose veterinary medicine as a career. I know of no relatives who were veterinarians.

My wife, Barbara (most people call her Babs), and I have

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been married for thirty-nine years and have three daughters, one son, and three grandchildren. Since Babs is a very big part of my life and the veterinary practice, and is referred to throughout the book, I'll take a few lines to introduce her. The story, 'Blind Date' covers my introduction to Babs, but every day of my life since the blind date she has been my beating heart. W-E-L-L, I had better not write any more about Babs or my 'goofy' short stories will turn into a sobbing love story.

My earliest recollection starts when I was seven or eight years old and the family lived in St. John, Indiana. My memories are very sketchy about living in St. John, but then again the finest details about some things are recalled.

I remember Sunday, December 7, 1941 as clear as if it were yesterday. I was playing marbles on the brown living room rug and Dad had his head glued to the big old Zenith radio. He was trying to hear every word about something that didn't make too much sense to me. I was making so much noise playing, he ran me out of the living room.

I have a few other incomplete memories of St. John, like crying when we moved from St. John, Indiana to Sabraton, West Virginia. Later on in my life I was told the family moved to my deceased Grandfather Kennedy's farm because of Dad's diagnosed severe medical problems. Dad became a full time farmer and his medical problems disappeared.

Granddad's farm is where Mom and Dad retreated during the survival times of the Great Depression and now, in the face of severe illness along with World War II, the retreat was repeated. The farm was the place that saved the Baker family but it also started a new way of life for this little boy. The nearest neighbor was a half mile away so I had to learn a little boy's duties on the farm, along with a new way to play. Little boys adapt quite quickly but I missed my older brother and sister who were away in the military service.

The fall season and my first school year in West Virginia rolled around and I was glad to see the kids of my fifth grade class at Sabraton School. I don't remember what kind of student I was, but the happy times of going to school changed to a definite dislike by the time I reached high school. Mom and Dad made me go on to Morgantown High School where I had my first touch with formal agricultural classes and the Future Farmers of America. I probably would have dropped out of high school if it hadn't been for agriculture.

In 1950, Dad became a worldwide consultant for the tin coating of steel. As a kid I didn't know Dad was an expert in the tin mill, but that is the job he left in 1943 to become a farmer. The rebuilding of the world after World War II brought about a need for his expertise. He packed up Mom, my two younger sisters and me and we were off to South Africa. I was a senior in high school by that time, but I gladly said goodbye to high school and willingly went to see the world.

With Dad working and my sisters going to school there wasn't much for me to do but get bored. Dad got me a job in the steel mill to keep me busy. It didn't take too long for me to figure out that school wasn't such a bad place after all.

Dad and Mom shipped me home after a year in Africa. I finished high school. The Korean War was going on at that time so I joined the Army. I served my tour of duty with sixteen months of the tour spent in Korea at the tail end of the war. I was ready to get out of the Army and go to college when my discharge papers were handed to me.

I used the Korean G.I. Bill of Rights to help pay for my B.S. degree in agriculture at West Virginia University and my D.V.M. at Ohio State University. The G.I. Bill helped but it didn't come close to covering the costs of eight years in college. By the time I received my doctor's degree I was happily married, had two children, was struggling to pay the current bills along with the

payments on the long term indebtedness of going to school. My occasional part-time jobs and my wife's paycheck (which was our biggest source of income) didn't pay all the bills. It was time for me to go to work as a veterinarian. I went job hunting.

I took a job in Huntington, West Virginia in an established small animal practice. I had plans of starting my own dairy practice but wanted some small animal experience. I needed to make money to pay bills - not go further in debt with a new business. Fate often steps in and changes things around, and fate did step in. I developed bursitis in my shoulders and couldn't physically handle large animals.

I went to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania after two years in Huntington and worked there in a small animal practice for two years. With four years of practice under my belt, all my legal obligations taken care of, and most of my school debts paid, I decided it was time to venture out and start my own practice. I didn't want the big city pressure-type practice and fate stepped in again. I was going back to the Huntington area and enter into a mixed animal practice with a classmate from my West Virginia University days. I purchased property on the Ohio side of the Ohio River and he purchased land on the West Virginia side. Things didn't work out the way they were planned. We just didn't work well together. I ended up with my small animal practice in Chesapeake, Ohio and my friend stayed in West Virginia.

Oh, my lands! It was thirty-three years ago when I received my degree and twenty-eight years ago when I started my own practice. What have I done besides raise a family and practice veterinary medicine? I tried playing golf for a short while but got tired of hunting for golf balls in the rough. Flying little airplanes held my interest for a short time, but I quit about the time it came for me to fly solo. Politics entered the picture one night at a school board meeting when I was treated like the 'village idiot'. I fixed that school board. I got elected to the board.

There is no explanation for 'Political Magnetism' but it caught me by the 'You can do something' and became my 'What do I do in my spare time' part of life. The people of the Chesapeake area elected me to the school board for two terms and the people of Lawrence County elected me to the position of Lawrence County Commissioner for three terms.

The 'Whys' of life are usually unanswered and this book writing is another 'Why' in my life. Writing this book has been fun work for me and I hope you didn't get too bored with me talking about myself. Thank you for reading this personal stuff and I hope you enjoy reading

'Doc... Don't Tell Anyone'.



## "GOD'S" MASTER PLAN

Polly came strolling into my private office in the back of the hospital and planted herself in my treasured antique oak chair. I could feel her 'you had better look at me' stare until I raised my head from writing a check. "Hi, Polly, how are you?"

"Oh, it's hot out there today! It is a beautiful summer afternoon, but a little too hot for this fat old lady. I do like it warm, and even hot, rather than having snow blowing in my face. How are you doing, Doc?"

"Fine, just fine. What brought you out of your air-conditioned house on this hot Friday afternoon?"

It was one of those greetings of wasted words because I knew she wanted to talk about her newest sick, stray cat. She seemed to always have a new stray cat to be saved from the worldly elements and that is when she would come wandering through the hospital, hunting me down. She always had the same worried tone in her greetings when one of her new stray cats was sick. She had a panic tone in her voice when one of her older cats came down with some kind of ailment.

"Doc, I have a stray kitten with discharge coming from both eyes. She's also coughing and sneezing. I'll guess her age at three months, she weighs about two pounds, and she needs some amoxicillin and roundworm medicine."

Over the years I've learned not to be offended by Polly telling me what and when her cats needed medicine, but there were times when I think my degree should have been in pharmacology. She has been a good observer of the veterinarians working on her cats, but she knows she isn't the veterinarian. Some newly employed, recently graduated veterinarians took her as a very personal pain in the butt for telling them what her cats needed, but they got over it quite quickly after getting to know her. We knew she would be knocking at our door with a cat in her arms if there were major problems. She takes good care of her cats and knows how and where to find a veterinarian.

"Polly, I'll get your medicine in a minute, but let me finish writing this check. I must get some of my bills paid."

"Okay, Doc, finish your checkwriting. How do you get any time in the middle of the afternoon to do book work? You're usually in surgery at this time of day."

"Polly, it is the Friday afternoon lull time. It seems as if everyone is getting ready for the weekend and taking their pets to the veterinarian is not too high on their priority list. We are a little guilty of getting ready for the weekend by not scheduling surgery for Friday, although we once did. We gave it up because too many people couldn't keep their appointments. Now, we only do emergency surgery on Friday."

I look forward to the two or three hours of Friday lull time. I get a few bills paid, the junk mail cleared from my desk, and I try to read a few medical journals.

"Polly, I'll get you some antibiotics for your stray kitten, but keep it isolated from your other cats until it gets over the upper respiratory infection you described. You know how contagious those viruses are and you don't want it spreading throughout your flock of cats."

"I'm doing that now and I hope the antibiotics will speed

up her recovery. By the way, Paul and I were talking about you and your book over breakfast this morning. How's it coming along? Are you ever going to finish it?"

"Polly, I am stuck on a section I feel should be included, but I can't get the words to flow. It may sound dumb to you, but I cannot answer a question that I am asked in many different ways. Like, 'Why didn't you become a real doctor?' or 'Do you need to go to school to be an animal doctor?' and 'Why did you choose to be a veterinarian?'. I know the when, but not the why I chose veterinary medicine as my career. I think the 'why' should be answered, but I haven't found it."

"Doc, I can tell you why."

"Polly, how can you know if I don't?"

"God wanted you to be a veterinarian, so you are a veterinarian."

"Polly, I was drunk when I decided to be a veterinarian. Are you sitting there telling me God got me drunk so I could decide to be a veterinarian?"

"I'm telling you God's master plan was for you to doctor animals. What do you mean you were drunk when you decided? I've never seen you drink, let alone be drunk."

"I don't drink now but I did get stone drunk out of my head when I was in the Army."

"When did you decide to be a veterinarian?"

"I was in Korea. The war was over. Do you remember President Truman called the war a 'police action'? Anyway, the war was over, the peace agreement was holding, and the Army was getting ready to ship me home. I was in the enlisted men's club, drinking with another fellow who was also waiting for our ship to come in to take us home. We talked and I told him I was a farm boy before joining the Army and he told me he had been a veterinary drug salesman. I don't know why, but he said I would make a good veterinarian. I told him, 'Okay, I'll be a veterinarian.'"

## 20 "God's" Master Plan

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"Doc, there has to be more to the story than that."

"Polly, I told you that you wouldn't believe me, but that is just how it happened. I had never talked to anyone about being a veterinarian, I just said, 'Okay, I'll be a veterinarian.' I didn't know one blooming thing about what a veterinarian really did and had only met one veterinarian in my whole life. Honest, Polly, I didn't know anything about what I was going to be doing the rest of my life."

"I believe you. Now, doesn't that make you understand that God had you in his master plan to doctor animals?"

"Polly, I stay out of religious debates."

"Doc, we are not into a religious debate. We were on the subject of your book and got sidetracked."

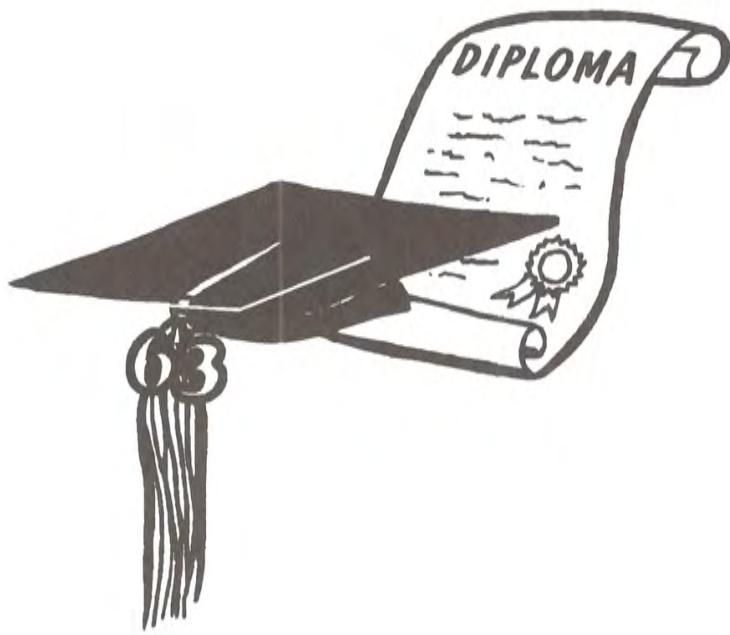
"No, we didn't! We were talking about the things that happened to get me here, to where I am today, a veterinarian writing short stories. There are so many things that seem to be unrelated to my being a veterinarian, but I think the reader would like to know why."

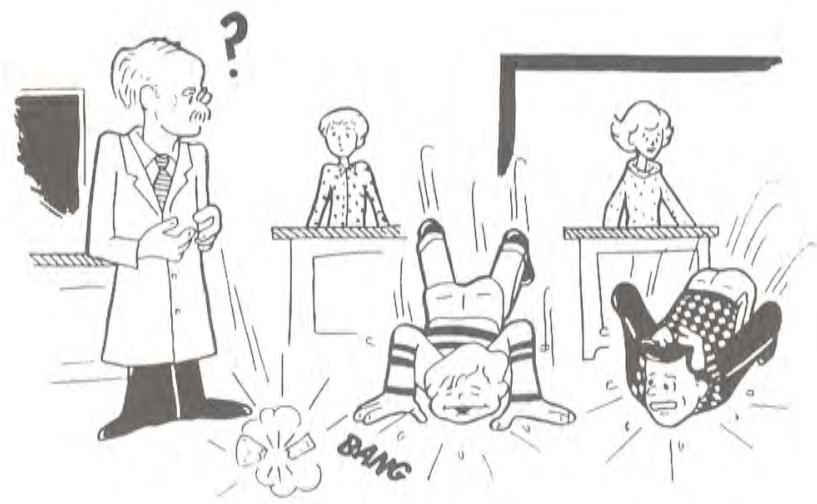
"Doc, God has a master plan and you fit in the plan as a veterinarian first and then to write about it. You are now being pushed to write about your experiences and anything else that pops into your mind that will help other people understand what it took to get you to and through veterinary school and all those years you have been in practice. Your short stories might help some young person make a career decision."

"Polly, as you know I've been writing short stories for a couple of years and I enjoy this adventure. I'll continue to write, but I am not thinking about myself as a model for the profession. I am only telling about some of the things that have happened to this veterinarian. Do you think God will be my book salesman?"

"He will be there!"

"Take your cat's medicine home and get it started. Thanks for stopping by and solving my problem."





## The Army and Chemistry

The U.S. Army gave me my discharge two months early, so I could start my first year of college in September with the new freshman class. I had ten days to get home, get enrolled, and start my first college class. There I was dressed in my army khaki pants, my brown army shoes, and my army 'T' shirt starting college. I didn't have the time or money for new clothes, but I was enrolled and seated in the very front row of a very large chemistry lecture room. Along with two hundred other students, I waited for a professor to make his entrance. The army had taught me how to hurry up and wait and there I was, using my army training. I struck up a conversation with the fellow seated next to me. He looked my age, maybe a little older, but I didn't think by much. I never was much good at guessing ages.

I told him I felt a little out of place with all these young kids who were just out of high school, wearing all those pretty new clothes. I went on to tell him that the Korean War had interrupted my higher education for about three years and I was feeling aged in the same room with the youngsters. I pulled back into my shell when he told me how World War II had interrupted his education fourteen years ago and he didn't know if he could compete with those young minds. He went on to tell me about his two children, who were eight and ten years old, so he couldn't put off going to school any longer or his children would soon be ahead of him.

A short dumpy man strutted into the lecture hall through a door off to my right that had a sign on it that read 'Employees Only'. The room became dead quiet. Evidently this was the chemistry professor with the no foolishness reputation.

"I am Doctor (Whatever His Name Was), and this is Chemistry One. Those of you who don't belong here, get out! Quietly. I am here to teach chemistry and the first thing you will learn is the difference between a chemical change and a physical change."

He paced back and forth behind the long chemistry lecture desk, waiting for those students who were in the wrong lecture room to exit. His head seemed to bob up and down as he paced behind the desk loaded with chemistry equipment. The desk must have been twenty feet long with beakers and a maze of glass tubing dangling from brackets hung from the ceiling. There was one little glass beaker setting off by itself on the far end of the desk with a small amount of liquid in it.

The door closed behind the last lost student and the professor jaunted toward the little beaker. He sprinkled a few flakes of something onto the surface of the liquid. The fluid immediately started to boil and shoot up smoke.

"That is a chemical change.", he announced as his magic flakes fizzled out and the smoke floated to the ceiling.

He started his tight-lipped pacing again. As he neared the end of the desk, the farthest away from me, he hesitated and picked up a glass beaker the size of a gallon jug. He was playing catch with the beaker, tossing it from his left to his right hand. He turned and was coming in my direction.

As he neared me, the beaker came flying in my direction. He had carelessly tossed the glass beaker and it exploded on impact with the cement floor. We two veterans had a reflex reaction as if someone had hollered, 'Hit the deck!'. We checked ourselves to see if we had been hit by any of the million pieces of

flying glass as we sheepishly reseated ourselves. The chemistry instructor's attack didn't strike us as being funny, but the recent high school graduates were laughing as the teacher was telling his class of chemistry students, "That is a physical change!".

The physical and chemical changes demonstration might have produced the results the professor wanted, but I thought he was nuts. Someone could have been hurt -- namely, me. Oddly enough, I also thought he was nuts the last day of Chemistry One.

The passing years haven't changed my opinion.



## BLIND DATE

"Carl, I need your help! I have tickets for the concert in Fairmont, but my girlfriend won't go unless I get a date for her younger sister. Will you be a blind date for her sister and go with us? Honest, Carl, she's no dud. She is a great girl and she works for a living -- at the telephone company."

"Watch it, Jim, you are about to oversell and I'm not really interested in going to a concert. School work has me tied down to the books. I'm not thrilled with a blind date either, but I'll loan you my car if you need a set of wheels."

Jim had been telling me how much I had changed this second year of college. I had become a social bore. He didn't need to tell me I was putting more time into studying and less time into extra curricular college activities. He repeatedly told me what I was already aware of, but I knew the reason for the changes. My freshman year had taught me one fact of life: you must put working time in with the books if you ever want to get an education and a college degree. Therefore, I adopted a rigorous, nose-to-the-grindstone, hardworking schedule to conquer the 'institution of higher learning'. I didn't want to regress to the mental condition of my freshman year when I found myself questioning my own judgement for selecting veterinary medicine as a career and wondering what the heck I was doing in college in the first place. When I finally recognized that work was needed to get through college, I changed my ways. I wasn't about to let higher education beat me.

"Yes, Carl, I'll need your car, but I need you for the blind date or I don't go."

Friends can be a big pain at times and Jim was being a painful friend. I knew he would continue bugging me until I agreed to the blind date and go to the concert. So!

"Jim, this is a one-time thing, just to get you off my back. Don't you ever do it again or you can hang our friendship on the clothesline. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Carl, I understand! I won't pressure you again, but you will have a good time, even though you're a bore."

I don't remember the concert but I surely remember the good, tingling feelings I had by the time the evening was over. The evening hadn't started out with good feelings, only bothersome worrying. I had found myself remembering my first official date after getting my driver's license. I was only fifteen and proudly driving Dad's new car, but worrying about my date's father. I'm not sure to this day if my ornery brother was teasing me or telling the truth, but he had me intimidated by my date's father's reputation. Brother had told me how nasty mean my date's father was to his three daughter's dates and the experience he had when he tried to date the older daughter. Brother said the father answered the door and scared him so much he ran off the porch, jumped into his car, gunned his engine and tossed gravel as he sped away. Brother didn't bother to tell me how the father scared him and I didn't think to ask.

A big sigh of relief ran through my body when my date answered her front door. The relief was only temporary and fear instantly resurfaced when she asked me in to meet her parents. They were nice, but I had some uncontrollable shaking which amused her father.

My first, and only, blind date caused me to be nervous but nothing like my first official date of years ago. The blind date nervousness was more of a question and answer period with myself with many unanswered 'whys' and 'what ifs'. 'What if my choice of

clothes for this rock concert was wrong?" "Would I embarrass her?" "What was she going to wear?" "What is this girl really like?" Waiting for Jim gave me more time to be nervous. I was talking to myself and trying to make sense out of my stupid worrying. I didn't want to be the embarrassment of the evening. "What does it really matter, it's only one night?" "Why am I going to a concert I normally would avoid and with someone I don't know?"

Jim finally got to my apartment and voiced his approval of my selection of a sport shirt and dress pants. With the clothes worry off my mind, we got started. Jim directed me through a bunch of 'turn left here' and 'turn right up there', and finally pointed out a place for me to park in front of his girlfriend's house. Jim was out of the car and leading the way up three big cement steps to the large porch where his girlfriend was swinging on an old-fashioned swing which hung by chains from the porch ceiling. After introducing me to his girlfriend, Jo, she went into the house for her sister. A very attractive blond followed Jo onto the porch. "Carl, this is my sister, Babs."

I must have been a little tongue tied, but I got a 'hello' out and said something about getting started to Fairmont since we were running a little late. We didn't have much to say as I drove to Fairmont, but I thought how lucky I was with this blind date. Her beauty was amplified by her pink, full Poodle skirt and white fluffy blouse. She was very attractive and very quiet. The trip would have been wordless if it hadn't been for Jo and Jim gabbing in the back seat. I didn't have a bit of trouble driving to or from Fairmont because Babs sat a comfortable, safe distance away from me, as if anticipating some uninvited animal-like move from me. I thought she might be thinking that since I was in pre-veterinary medicine I might take the role of some crazy, sex hungered animal or maybe the role of some dirty old man. It's hard to figure out what a blind date is thinking.

After the concert we made it back to her house and I gentlemanly opened her car door and walked her to the front door.

She thanked me for taking her to the concert, politely shook my hand and darted into her house. Jim and Jo were on the front porch swing and hurriedly informed me that Jim could catch the late bus home. My blind date was over.

When I got back to my apartment there was my unfinished homework for the day, but I could only think about how well Babs and I had hit it off. I sat there wondering how I had impressed her. I thought I had been a big bore. I must open a book and get some work done. But the telephone book was the only book opened that night. I called and thanked her for a very nice evening. I was hoping she would tell me she had enjoyed herself as much as I did. Her first response seemed a little favorable, "I had a nice evening." But, was she just being nice? Then again, she could just be trying to get off the phone gracefully. I pushed ahead and asked her out the next weekend. She said she couldn't go out next weekend because she had to work. My gut feelings knew she didn't want to see me again. She surprised me with, "Carl, I had a great time tonight and will call you when my new work schedule is posted for next week."

The evening was pleasantly over.

Our relationship started to bloom, but we had some difficulties finding time to date with her shift work and me trying to study. We spent our stolen time together doing nothing much but watching her mother's television or just swinging on the front porch swing. We enjoyed ourselves and got out to a few college events, but didn't have enough time or money for dining and dancing.

The 'Little Eastern Livestock Show' was coming up and it is a big event to the College of Agriculture. The Ag School administration expects all the Ag students to attend and most students went or paid the consequences rendered by the instructors. Although, I was a pre-vet student, I was also an Ag

student, so I had to go. I asked Babs if she would go with me to the cattle show.

Babs was a true city girl and had never been on a farm -- unless you want to call her dad's garden out on his back lot a farm. She agreed to go if her sister, Jo, would go. I had to explain what the 'Little Eastern Livestock Show' was, and emphasized that we would only be observers up in the grandstands.

"Girls, there is a course in showmanship which requires the students to prepare and show one of the University Farm's bovines. The show is big time for the students and their grade for the course depends on the showmanship. I'm sure you will see something you have never seen before and maybe won't understand the fine points of showmanship, but you will enjoy yourselves."

Babs and Jo agreed to go, but I had to get a date for Jo because she and Jim were no longer dating. Everything worked out quite well. A big, quiet type farm boy friend of mine agreed to the blind date. This outing would be a little different. Two farm boys taking two city girls to an all farmer-type show. This show wouldn't be like the show in Fairmont. We (Herb, Jo, Babs, and I) had good seats with an excellent view of the arena floor, comparable to the fifty yard line at a football game.

The steers were being shown when I heard Jo say to Herb, "Those are nice looking cows." Herb responded, "They are not cows." Dignified city girl Jo continued, "Those are nice looking bulls." Herb quietly said, "They are not bulls."

By this time the students around us were turning to see who it was making these 'so out of character' statements. The majority of the students knew Herb and avoided looking at him, they were too busy looking at Jo. The attention didn't bother Jo, she wanted a much better response than she was getting from Herb.

"Herb, if they are not cows and they are not bulls, then what are those things down there walking around in the saw dust?!"

Herb had a one word answer, "Steers".

The group of curious students seated around us had stopped watching the show and were watching Herb and Jo.

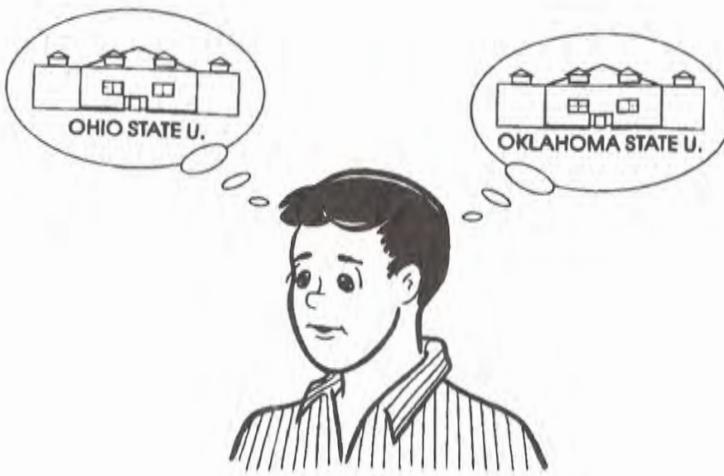
The city girl had to push on, "Well, what are steers?"

Herb wasn't quick with his answer this time. When he finally responded the laughter from the grandstands scared the steers. One nervous steer jumped as if he had been prodded with an electric shocker prod, causing the other steers to move and pull at the showmen. The steers had befuddled looks on their faces from the laughter and they nervously resisted resuming the show stance. The steers settled down as the laughter caused by Herb's definition of steers subsided.

We farm folks had never heard 'castration' defined as gentlemanly as Herb explained steers to Jo, "Steers are modified bulls."

Bless her heart, I never let her forget that night for the rest of her life. She turned out to be a good sister-in-law, but she never attended another cattle show, or dated Herb again.





## Applying for Veterinary School

My guts were taut, the nerves were as tight as banjo strings, and if picked at, I would give off sour notes sounding worse than any poorly plucked banjo. I was in a bad mental shape from worrying about my upcoming interview for veterinary school. All I could think about was 'I must get through the interview or I won't have a chance at being a veterinarian.' I had made it through the first hurdles of being accepted when my pre-veterinary medicine undergraduate grades and my applications made it through the examinations of the veterinary board and the admissions departments at Oklahoma State and Ohio State. Yea! I'm across the first hurdle but the odds were still against my getting into veterinary school. Twenty-five to one odds aren't good when your future is in the hands of an interview board at West Virginia University, but they are a little better than no odds at all.

I had to be interviewed at my home school by instructors who I had in my pre-veterinary medicine classes. The process seemed dumb to me, but professional schools and government contracts have their own rules and ways of doing things. It all boiled down to supply and demand. The demand for veterinarians was being met by the eighteen veterinary schools scattered throughout the United States. The states not having veterinary schools had residents demanding veterinary schooling so a method was established for out-of-state residents to attend a college of veterinary medicine as instate residents. The federal government

got involved, somehow, and it ended up with each state in the union having designated schools where their residents could attend veterinary school. West Virginia had contracts with Ohio State and Oklahoma State for four positions in each starting class. It wasn't too bad a deal for those students being accepted because West Virginia paid all of the out-of-state fees charged to their students. It was not a good deal for those students wanting to attend a different school. In my case, it was either Ohio State or Oklahoma State because the other veterinary schools wouldn't even consider my application. So my only hope for veterinary school was in the hands of the interviewing board.

I didn't know anyone who had been through the interview phase of applying for veterinary school. I had no one to turn to for advice. The tension and speculation mounted as I waited for the interview. What questions would be asked? What if they asked, 'Why do you want to be a veterinarian?' I didn't have an honest answer. I wondered if they would ask for references from veterinarians. I didn't know any veterinarians to ask for a reference. I had only met one veterinarian in my life and he was the veterinarian who doctored Dad's cattle. I went to talk to old Doc Brown.

I sat on his front porch rocking in his antique rocking chair and we talked about some of the animals he had treated for Dad and even Granddad. I hadn't realized that Doc Brown was very old, but he was. We eventually got around to my upcoming interview.

"Carl, I don't think I can be of much help to you. There have been too many changes in veterinary medicine since I graduated from veterinary school."

"Doctor Brown, I am sorry, but I don't know when or where you went to medical school."

"I was in the last class of veterinary students to graduate from West Virginia University. I graduated in nineteen hundred and two, fifty-seven years ago. Do you now understand why I

can't be of much help to you? Too many years have passed since I was in school."

"I didn't know West Virginia University ever had a veterinary school. Nineteen hundred and two puts us back to mainly horse and cow medicine, how did you get into medical school? Were there interviews or tests back in those days?"

A grin appeared on his weather beaten face as he replied, "You're correct about the teaching of cow and horse medicine. I don't remember any other animal medicine being taught. Yes, I had to pass an entrance exam but it was much different than what you must take. You could call it a hands on test in today's language. I had to stand over a five gallon bucket of warm, smelly horse blood and stir it with a long wooden paddle. If I got sick, I failed the test and didn't make it into veterinary school."

"You're right, there are a lot of differences in the requirements. The scheduled pre-veterinary school college courses take three or four years to complete before an application to veterinary school is even considered. Those applying must have at least one year of farm experience and also write a letter stating, 'Why I Want To Be A Veterinarian'. I've completed the required course work, plus enough college hours to get my B.S. Degree in Agriculture. I even composed a letter about why I wanted to be a veterinarian, and I really don't know why. Someone, somewhere will probably have a good laugh when reading my letter. I now need to get through the interview. If I don't get accepted I don't know what I'll do."

"Carl, I wish you well and I'm sorry I can't be of more help to you. You will make a fine veterinarian."

"Thank you for visiting with me. You've helped me a great deal with your comment about me making a fine veterinarian. I hope to make it, and maybe, practice as long as you."

The interview day and time finally came around. I was wearing my seldom used suit with a white shirt and tie and was nervously sitting in the outer office waiting room for my turn to

be interviewed. I sat there wishing for a bucket of horse blood to stir. I knew I could stir the blood without getting sick. I didn't know about getting through the interview.

I was surprised at the questions the interviewers asked. They asked about the clubs that I belonged to and where I worked to help pay my way through school. My part time jobs in the service station and helping install furnaces didn't seem like much to me but the interviewers seemed quite interested. I told them about the Korean War G.I. Bill school benefits and finally about my wife working for the telephone company. The interviewers didn't seem interested in my being raised on a farm. I wondered why. The interview was over in about fifteen minutes with the last question being, "Where do you want to go to school, Oklahoma State or Ohio State?"

The waiting started again, waiting to hear from one of the veterinary schools. The Army training to 'hurry up and wait' wasn't helping. Waiting is waiting is waiting.

The month of April was occupied with my waiting for the veterinary schools to accept or deny my application. I wasn't too worried about being accepted, but I had to wait for their formal acceptance. I also had a few classes to complete before I would receive my B.S. degree in agriculture. April was a very long miserable month, but spring was in full bloom.

It was a bright, sunny May day when I met the postman and received my letter from Oklahoma State. I tore it open and there was, "Your application to veterinary school can not be accepted." I slammed it down and used some language to describe Oklahoma which I hadn't used since being in the Army. There were no reasons why my application was denied. I was devastated. What did I do wrong? What is Ohio State going to do? What am I going to do?

I went through another week of nervous waiting before Ohio State's letter finally came. I very slowly, and neatly, opened the letter. I was accepted to 'The Ohio State University's College

of Veterinary Medicine', but conditionally. The letter went on to say I needed one three-hour course to meet all the requirements. "Yea, I'm going to Ohio State. I'll pick up the needed course in summer school." I don't remember any celebrating by Babs or me but I'm sure she was happy to get one miserable husband back to normal.

The very next day I went to sign up for West Virginia's summer school. I received, "Sorry, Mr. Baker, but the course you want is not taught in summer school."

What do I do now? I head out to Columbus to sign up for the course at Ohio State. I went with my letter from Ohio State and talked to the people in admissions.

"Mr. Baker, there has been a mistake."

"Oh, Lord. What now?"

"You don't need the course mentioned in the letter of acceptance to veterinary school. You are a Korean veteran and Korean veterans do not need the course in physical education. Someone goofed. Take the summer off and be back this fall for your first year in veterinary school."

"I don't want to argue with you, but will you please put it in writing why the physical education course is not needed?"

"Sir, we had plans to do that very thing as well as notifying the veterinary college of our mistake and your acceptance. Can you wait thirty or forty minutes for a copy of our letter or do you want us to mail it?"

"Thank you, I'll wait."

Back on the West Virginia University campus, my curiosity got the best of me. Why did Oklahoma State turn me down? I went to one of the interviewers and asked if he knew why.

"Carl, I've wondered why they turned you down myself. I thought you would be accepted by both schools. I went back and reviewed what we had sent to them about our interview."

"Well, what did you find, if anything?"

"The very last question of the interview we asked if you had a preference of schools. You stumbled a little on answering, but finally said, 'Yes, Ohio State because it is closer to home for my wife and me.' The answer was included in our interview report to Oklahoma."

"You guys put me through a bunch of problems for being honest with you. I hope you don't ask that stupid question in the future. You should know that most of the people you are interviewing want to get into any medical school and will say he has no preference rather than be honest. I gave you my honest answer and it cost me, but the whole thing is over now. I'm going to Ohio State."





## CONFRONTATION

I can't remember one teacher who didn't get their feathers ruffled with me at one time or another, but there were a few unfair teachers. I never witnessed a down and out fistfight confrontation but have heard of a few students getting kicked out of school for attacking a teacher. I remember the one and only time I should have hit a professor in the mouth and a few other places, but didn't. I was very upset! This guy needed a 'Big Brother' attitude adjustment. I was in the wrong place at the wrong time to help change his attitude.

I was in my second year of veterinary school when we had to go out of the safe surroundings of the veterinary college for an advanced chemistry course. The first year in veterinary school was one of basic stuff, but subtle acclimation to the attitude of a professional school was silently embedded. In veterinary school I spent my time in the buildings of the veterinary college with veterinarians as the instructors and studying only veterinary medicine. I wasn't out running around the campus getting to a class here or there that didn't seem to be related to anything in veterinary medicine, but the chemistry course was needed for my degree. The veterinary school gave me a safe area to learn to be a veterinarian. At the time when the chemistry course came up, I hadn't given much thought to the required class other than I would need to bust my butt to get through it.

Not bragging, but I was doing quite well. I busted my butt and the extra work was paying off with high test scores, all A's. We had experiments to do and research papers to write and the

'A's' kept coming. I didn't make below an 'A' on any of my chemistry work. I was sure I had my 'A'.

The semester ended and I was back in the confines of the veterinary college before the prior semester grades finally got to me. I was shocked when my chemistry grade was a 'C'. I couldn't help but think someone had made a mistake, so it was time to go find out what happened to my hard earned 'A'. It was back to the chemistry building and a meeting with the instructor. "Sir, I don't understand why you gave me a 'C' grade, was there a mistake somewhere along the line?"

With the arrogance of a person inflated by his high opinion of himself he started, "Young man, this course is graded on a curve, there are so many 'A's' and so many 'F's', and you got an 'A'."

His attitude put my defensive system into gear and it told me to be careful with this haughty individual. "Sir, I know what grading on the curve means, but I must beg your pardon, my grade sheet says 'C' not an 'A'."

"Young man, you made an 'A', but one of your classmates from veterinary school came to me and told me if they didn't get an 'A' they would be kicked out of veterinary school. I gave your classmate your 'A' and you got their 'C'."

"I can't believe what I just heard. You gave my 'A' to someone else because they needed it?"

"Now, young man, if you want to go any further with this discussion on grades you get the Dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine and I will get the Dean of the Chemistry School and the four of us will sit down and talk about your 'C'."

Some hidden power kept me glued to my chair, staring at some unknown object while my brain was rationalizing the situation. The brain told me that I was only a 'peon' student who didn't have a chance of getting a grade change in the mystic world of this aloof college professor. I would be hung out to dry by this

guy's lies if we had his proposed meetings of the deans. I slowly rose from my chair and retreated to the door while suppressing a great desire to unleash my temper with at least one fist to this guy's nose. Before exiting, a few parting words had to be said or I would bust a gut holding them in and never forgive myself for allowing this educated idiot to walk all over me.

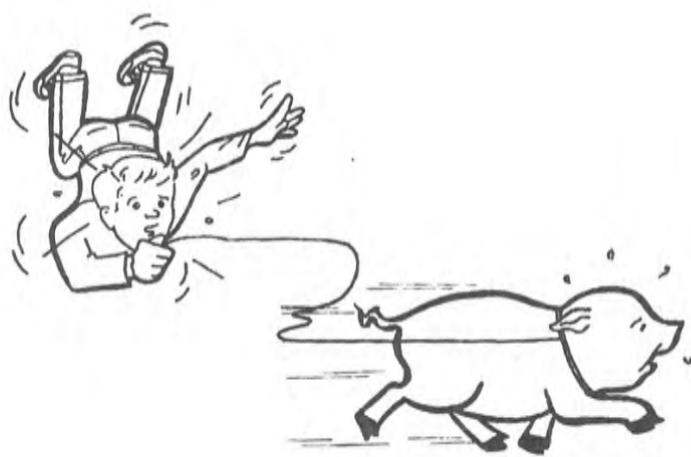
"Sir, first, don't ever call me a young man again. You are not my superior! Your tone of voice and choice of words are not intimidating me into submission. I am probably numerically older than you so never address me as 'young man'! I also want you to know I am not stupid and know I don't stand a ghost's chance in hell in any meeting where your lies would be believed. I also know if I lay a hand on you I'll be kicked out of school. Sir, there are a few things you don't know about me that I feel obligated to tell you. While you were dodging the draft with your school deferment, I served my time in Korea. You do remember the Korean War? I hope someone has told you the Army trains soldiers to kill the enemy because my Army training is pushing me now. You are the enemy this time, sir!"

He was giving me that I'm better than you are look and you can't do one thing about it.

I was beat. I knew the 'A' was not going onto my grade sheet but I couldn't leave the room as a beaten, wet washcloth. I hoped to introduce him to a little bit of this big old world, or at least make my temper calm down.

"Sir, I own an aging 1956, four door, two tone blue and white Chevy which needs a new set of brakes. I am not a very good driver and when the brakes fail I use the curb to help get the old Chevy stopped. I've even had the old car jump a curb. I tell you this because if I ever see you walking, I'll relive this moment and forget about steering and start staring at you. The old Chevy might just jump a curb and make your body part of the Chevy's grill."

His arrogant stare never changed. I slammed his door and lived with my 'C'.



## AND THEN THERE WAS DWAYNE

The veterinarians, whoever they were, who set the requirements needed to enter the College of Veterinary Medicine at The Ohio State University added a non-college requirement, farm experience. We know things change and the requirement of farm experience is no longer needed, but I think the experience with animals on the farm can not be substituted by book learning alone. I met the non-college requirement by being raised on a farm and proud of it. Of course, that is another story, but I must assume the farm experience requirement was waived for some of my classmates. Dwayne told me he had used his granddad's farm as his farm experience although his Grandma's Sunday dinner was all he was exposed to at Granddad's farm.

Dwayne tried very hard to learn animals' actions and reactions, but veterinary school was not the place to get farm experience. In Dwayne's efforts to learn, he often put himself and his classmates in danger of being hurt by an animal responding to his improper actions. He was so hardheaded and independent, he wouldn't ask for help and his classmates would stand back and laugh, wondering if he would survive before they stepped in and saved him.

The day I was cleaning the hoof of a very gentle mare, the impossible happened. Impossible until Dwayne made it happen. Dwayne and I were assigned to the horse barn and one of our daily duties was to pick the horses' feet until they were clean.

I was in the normal crouching position for picking a

horse's rear hoof. I had my backside up against the rear of the mare's right rear leg with the lower part of her leg between my legs and the hoof resting solely upon my knee. I was cleaning the sole of her hoof when I felt the mare's body lean to her left. I waited for her to struggle to put her foot down, but she only leaned and I continued picking.

"Hey, Carl, is this hoof clean enough?", came from the front end of the mare.

From my crouching position, I looked over my shoulder and there was Dwayne holding up the right foreleg.

I hollered, "You idiot!", as I dropped the rear foot to the stall floor. I was at a loss for words that could be used in mixed company, but I remembered some I had learned in the Army. I regained some self composure and quietly told him to, "Put that foot down!"

Sheepishly, he dropped the foot.

"How did you get that foot off the floor?"

"I just picked up the foot and started cleaning. I was only trying to help you clean her feet."

We had both of her feet on the right side off the floor. She is not supposed to be able to stand on two feet, but she did. The mare had just leaned her left side up against the stall wall and was balancing herself on her two left feet. She had all four feet on the stall floor now as she gave us a look of utter disgust, hoping we were finished. We were.

The next week, the senior assignments rotated and I went from the racehorse barn to the regular large animal barn. Lo and behold, I was getting my briefing on the housed animals from Dwayne. I believe the hospital staff had rotated Dwayne a little early, fearing he might hurt one of those expensive racehorses.

"Carl, be extra careful with the jackass in stall number seven, he is mean, real mean."

"Let's go look at him while you give me his medical history."

"He is one of the working 'jacks' from the prison farm and he has an injured right foreleg. No one seems to know how the leg was injured. The prisoners said he had run into a plow the day he got out of his stall and was roaming around the farm. I can't buy that but who is going to argue with the convicts. I would guess the prisoners were teasing him and he tried to strike them with his fore feet. Can you picture him rearing up on his hindlegs and striking at the teaser? He probably hit his foreleg on something which caused the injury. You might be able to see from over the stall door, the wound is on the back part of the leg, not the front as it would be if he had run into something. Carl, you must watch this 'jack', he is trying to get even with mankind for all of the teasing he has endured on the prison farm. He will nip you or kick you without warning and then brag about his feat by braying at you."

We were up to the jack's stall looking over the five foot high by two inch thick plank door. The door and the jack were to the left side of the stall. He was holding the swollen, nasty looking right foreleg up off the floor. I couldn't see much detail from outside the stall, but it looked extremely sore. I was reviewing the jack's medical record and could see where the normal treatment for this type of wound hadn't worked and surgery had been scheduled. The surgeons will be searching for a foreign body and, hopefully, get most of the infection out, plus establish proper drainage from the wound.

"Dwayne, how can he kick if he can only stand on three legs?" I had barely gotten the words out of my mouth when that jack leaned his left side up against the stall wall and let fly with his heavily shod right rear foot. The steel cased hoof hit the stall door like a cannon ball, sending noise waves throughout the barn. The windows were vibrating in the old maroon brick building.

I dropped jack's metal medical clipboard as I jumped back from the stall door. The jack's records went flying with some of them ending up in the smelly stuff often found on a barn floor.

Oh boy, am I going to get chewed out for messing up those records.

The jack, in typical jackass bellowing, trumpeted his victory. I was shaking and yelling unkind words at Jack.

"That's how he kicks, Carl."

"Thanks, Dwayne."

"Carl, the language you were using should make him feel like he is back home listening to his prisoner friends."

Dwayne moved on to another section of large animal surgery and I got the job of assisting the anesthesiologist and surgeons. I lassoed Jack and pulled him into a corner where the anesthesiologist gave him a tranquilizer. A thirty minute wait and we had a very pleasant, almost happy, jackass. The anesthesia was given without any problems and the surgeons went to work on the prone jack.

The surgeons removed a sliver of wood about one inch wide and three inches long which had been rubbing the tendons. The healing was uneventful. Jack started using his leg a little and in about a week he was shipped back to the prison farm for rest and rehabilitation.

Tomorrow I'll be rotating to another section of large animal surgery. I am following Dwayne now so I had better go see what lies ahead.

I walked in on some very serious belly laughing by some of my classmates. I looked around and was forced into joining the laughter. There was Dwayne trying to put a sow back into her stall. Dwayne's lack of farm experience was showing and his classmates were enjoying the show.

Dwayne had placed his lariat around a three hundred pound sow's neck ever so neatly and was trying to lead her back to her stall. Poor Dwayne thought pigs would lead like dogs or horses. Pigs don't lead and this sow was pulling against the lariat and taking Dwayne all over the surgery ward. The sow got a little irritated at the goings on and knocked Dwayne down and was

dragging him through some urine she had voided on a previous trip through the area. Dwayne wasn't about to turn loose; he was holding on until the sow tired out.

We got our laughs but decided it was time to put a stop to this show before Dwayne's hard head was hurt. We drove the sow back into her box stall. It was a good lesson for Dwayne.

Would you believe Dwayne has a very large pig practice these days?



## THE SUMMER OF 1962

No summer vacation this year. I'm now a senior in veterinary school with six weeks of summer clinics ahead of me. Oh, the summer clinics! They are an abrupt change in each senior's life. The change from being just a student to becoming an 'almost' doctor. The experience of accepting the responsibility of doctoring animals happens but once, and it is sudden and traumatic. It is a very personal transition from student to animal doctor.

The transition is so abrupt, there is no chance for evolutionary changes -- one day a junior student and the next day a senior 'almost' doctor. We must now assume the responsibilities for a living, breathing creature with whom we must go through the same procedures of diagnosing the malady as the veterinarian assigned to the case. We must view the animal, ask questions of the owner, analyze our mental list of possibilities, recommend laboratory tests, present and defend our tentative diagnosis and proper treatment to the attending veterinarian. We must learn to act like veterinarians now because this is what we will be doing the for rest of our lives. This transition takes place in those six weeks of summer clinics.

The administration figured there would be a major student revolt if they kept all of us the entire summer so they divided the class in half and assigned each group to six weeks of 'The Summer

Clinics'. It is difficult to say what I learned during those six weeks, but I was glad to see my summer clinics come to a close. I felt more like a veterinarian and accepted the responsibilities which came with the title of 'Doctor of Veterinary Medicine'.

There were six weeks remaining of my senior summer to earn a little money to help offset the cost of school and help support my growing family. There weren't many jobs available, but I found a late summer job in my hometown of Morgantown, West Virginia working for a veterinarian. I was lucky to find any kind of job, let alone working for a veterinarian. The job turned into an experience in veterinary medicine which few veterinarians experience in a lifetime.

Dr. Earl, the veterinarian who I would be spending my time with during the second half of the summer of 1962, had a mixed small and large animal practice along with some government work. A mixed small and large animal practice was quite different than school. In school we were assigned to sections in which only one species was treated. While in mixed practice we might be doctoring a dog one minute and ten minutes later be working on a horse. The sudden change from species to species requires the changing of thought patterns to the type of animal being medicated.

The only government work which we were exposed to in veterinary school was public health related. We inspected school kitchens and restaurants, slaughter houses, and food processing plants. The testing for tuberculosis and brucellosis was more a part of bovine medicine than a part of government work, but it was government enforced testing. Dr. Earl's government work turned out to be associated with research in surviving an atomic bomb attack. The Cold War of long ago had the American citizens building bomb shelters, and the government doing all kinds of research related to an atomic bomb attack. The research Dr. Earl was associated with was geared to finding something to eat if we survived an actual atomic attack.

W-E-L-L ... in the back hills of West Virginia there are old limestone mines which were no longer working and someone - somewhere - thought they would make excellent bomb shelters. The old mines would give excellent protection against an atomic bomb blast, but no one knew if anything could survive underground for any length of time. I didn't know what all was being studied in the old limestone mine, but my boss had some pigs to take care of about a mile back in the side of a West Virginia mountain.

My first trip into the side of the mountain revealed more than I had anticipated when I was first told about raising pigs in a limestone mine.

My buddies in the service and at Ohio State would razz me, in good taste, about being a West Virginia coal miner, but in reality the only mine I'd even been close to was the old family coal mine on Granddad's farm. The coal mine memories from 1943 had tainted what I had anticipated at the limestone mine. Just after moving to Granddad's farm I remember the warning Dad gave to his three boys, "Stay away from that old coal mine!"

That mine had supplied enough coal for family use when Granddad was alive, but now was a dangerous hole in the side of a mountain. Eventually, Dad would close the mine shaft when he got around to finding time and the dynamite to blow the entrance closed. As young boys often do, I found adventure in going into the old coal mine. I had Granddad's old carbide lamp, his cloth-type miner's hat which held the lamp on my head, and I went exploring. The opening into the mine was only about six feet wide and three feet high so I had to crawl into it. The short adventure into the forbidden mine is remembered as getting wet and dirty from the puddles and the coal dust. The black, coal-lined walls of the old mine seemed to eat the light that was put forth by the flickering carbide lamp. I didn't go very far into the mine before retreating into the saving daylight. The little boy memories of a scary, dark, dirty, damp hole in the side of a mountain has stayed

with me to this day. I had anticipated all that stuff in the limestone mine.

The first thing Dr. Earl came to on our first trip to the limestone mine was a guard/caretaker who waved us through his check point at the mine entrance. Ahead was a large opening about fifty feet wide and fifty feet high. Oh, boy, was this different from Granddad's coal mine!

The hole in the mountain dwarfed Dr. Earl's Jeep as we drove on the mirror smooth limestone road which had been used by the big trucks to haul out the limestone. I learned a little about the engineering of mining on the drive into the mountain. The main shaft was lined with mined out rooms to each side, leaving enough supporting material to keep the mountain from collapsing into the mined out area. Most of the mined out rooms were empty, but occasionally we would see some research activity in isolated rooms. I was told about different kinds of research taking place for the Cold War efforts but was advised, "Don't ask any questions."

The headlights of the Jeep seemed to be intensified by the whitish limestone as we drove a mile back into the mountain to reach the mined out room housing the pig project. The room was large, it reminded me of my high school basketball gym with all the lights turned on and a big fan blowing cool air. There seemed to be pigs everywhere. Each sow had her own little house and exercise yard. Some of the sows were pregnant and some were nursing their litters. The litters of pigs were of different ages which led me to believe that this was an older, on-going piece of research. Dr. Earl's job was to check the pigs' health and to do any medical work needed. Someone else had the job of feeding and cleaning. I never met the people who were doing the nutritional studies.

The lights, or the source of power for the lights, didn't arouse my curiosity but the ventilating fan caught my eye. A large airplane propeller, maybe six feet high being turned by a large electric motor, was being used to circulate the air in the room. I never thought about where the air was coming from or where it

was going, but I thought it unusual to see an airplane propeller being used as a large fan. I now wonder if anyone considered what the air would be like after an atomic bomb blast and then circulating that same air through a pig barn which would then be shared by people. Oh, well, we haven't had any atomic blasts and most farmers know the smell of pigs without going into a mountain..

My boss also worked for a millionaire who had recently purchased a farm with a herd of Angus cattle. The farmer who sold the farm had only fed and watered the cattle and allowed the herd to reproduce and grow as they wanted with no herd management. To make a long story short, the new owner wanted a herd of show cows and gave the job of upgrading the herd to my boss. Dr. Earl and I were farm boys with degrees in agriculture so we felt at ease with this project. It only takes money and this millionaire didn't mind spending his.

We had our next six weeks planned out quite well and our hopes were up to accomplishing many things. It didn't work out the way we had planned. Dr. Earl was bitten by a rabid dog and had to take the anti-rabies shots. Rabies is one of those occupational hazards, but few of us have had the severe reactions Dr. Earl had to the shots. He ended up in the hospital. The pigs in the limestone mine became my responsibility along with the artificial breeding of the Angus herd.

The pigs were easy to take care of but those Angus cows were one big headache. We had pulled all of the bulls out of the herd and sent them on down the road except for a young bull we had vasectomized. He was a good performer for us, marking every cow ready to be bred artificially. We had planned on artificially breeding all the cows with frozen semen supplied by the artificial breeders association. It turned out that some of the cows had been bred by an unknown bull so we ended up selling those pregnant cows.

I was raised on a dairy farm and had no experience with crazy black cows.

Maybe crazy is the wrong word but their actions and reactions didn't come close to the gentle dairy cows. Fortunately, this farm was equipped with all kinds of restraining devices to make the job easier but those black cows could do enough damage in one second to make a veterinarian lose his self control. The pain inflicted by those radar controlled hooves was worse than any pain caused by a kicking horse. I think those black beasts were there to hurt veterinarians.

The summer of 1962 quickly came to an end for me as a new school year started. I felt quite good about what I had accomplished with the pigs in the mountain and the Angus herd improvement. I did my job but wouldn't know the results of my efforts for many years, if ever. I got back to being an 'almost' veterinarian at Ohio State for the last time. Nine more months of school and I would become a full fledged veterinarian. A Doctor of Veterinary Medicine.





## DR. TROOP AND THE BROWN SWISS 'SUSIE'

The experiences of the summer of 1962 made my senior year of schooling a piece of cake. I was still just a student but the new attitude of being an 'almost' doctor had pushed aside the feeling of being a student and replaced it with the responsibilities of being a veterinarian. The attitude of the instructors had also changed along with their efforts to put their personal finishing touches on the soon to be animal doctors. Dr. Troop put some very real finishing touches on this 'almost' doctor. He set me up beautifully with an indirect attack on my nervous system. He then stepped in and relieved the tension by making me do something in front of onlookers, knowing someone is always watching as the veterinarian is working. I've thanked him silently for this episode every time I've done a Caesarian section in my career, but most certainly not at the time it happened.

Dr. Troop was the head man at Ohio State University's large animal veterinary hospital and one heck of a good teacher, not needing to preach to teach. I tried to watch him do surgery every chance I got and he usually drew a large crowd of observers. I wasn't an observer this time, I was the number one senior assistant. Dr. Troop was scheduled to do a caesarian section on a big Brown Swiss cow this particular morning and I was responsible for having everything ready as well as being the surgical assistant. The surgery is usually done under local anesthesia in a standing position, so the cow was put into surgical stocks. We fastened her

head and shoulders to a heavy, two-inch thick metal pipe to keep her from walking around. Then, I started the preparations for the surgery. I clipped the hair from the surgical site, the left flank area, and was scrubbing the surgical field when Dr. Troop arrived with a hearty, "Hi, Carl, how are you this fine morning?"

"Just fine, sir, but I'm not quite ready for you."

Dr. Troop casually started talking to the observers as I continued scrubbing the cow for surgery. The veterinary hospital seldom had a cow for a Caesarian section because most of them are done in the field by the practicing veterinarians, therefore we had drawn a large number of observers today. Dr. Troop was laying it on pretty thick as he talked to the observers...knowing that I was listening to every word. "This Brown Swiss cow is very valuable, but she cannot deliver her calves normally. Susie ran into trouble trying to deliver her first calf and the local veterinarian was called in for an emergency Caesarian section. Susie fell on some ice when she was quite young and injured her pelvis. The injury from the fall seems to be the cause of her problems when delivering her calves. The owner avoids emergency Caesarian sections by scheduling her for surgery here at Ohio State. If things turn out the way they are supposed to, this will be our third successful operation on Susie. This calf is quite important and will be worth about two thousand dollars when it takes its' first breath. The new owner would prefer a bull calf, but regardless of the sex it is scheduled to fly out tomorrow for South America. In this country we have gotten away from the dual role 'beef and dairy cow' which the Brown Swiss is noted for, but they are in great demand in South America."

Dr. Troop injected the local anesthetic and continued talking to the observers while the anesthetic took effect and I finished the preparations. I had finished the surgical prep and had the cow all draped for surgery. I was scrubbed, gowned, gloved, and ready to assist Dr. Troop. I knew that he knew everything was ready for him to get started but he continued to talk. Dr. Troop started telling the details of each prior Caesarian section and all the

problems he anticipated with today's surgery. He finally turned to me with, "Oh, I'm sorry, Mr. Baker, I didn't know you were ready. I'll be there in a minute."

He finally finished his conversation with the observers and turned to me and asked, "Is everything ready for surgery, Carl?"

"Yes, sir. I am ready and I think Susie is ready to get rid of the load she has been toting around."

Dr. Troop was carefully selecting the scalpel handle which fit his hand just perfectly and then he carefully attached a new disposable blade. He looked up from the instrument tray at the surgical site as if he wasn't sure everything was the way it should be, making me wonder what I had done wrong. He looked at his selected surgical blade as if it might not be the proper blade for the surgery. I was nervously standing off to his right waiting for my first order to do something. I had worked with surgeons who said very little and those who must holler at everyone, but I didn't remember Dr. Troop being anything but calm, cool and very business-like. Of all the stuff he had just talked about I couldn't figure out what was coming next, so I waited. I didn't have to wait very long. He turned and handed the scalpel to me and said, "You had better get started or we won't get finished by my lunch time."

I froze.

"Mr. Baker, are you going to stand there and try to keep that instrument clean or are you going to get started with a skin incision?"

I thought he was joking with me, at least my shaking nervous system hoped he was joking.

"You want me to do surgery?!"

"You have the scalpel and a cow that will need about a ten-inch skin incision to get the calf out."

I was going to call his bluff. He surely wouldn't let a student put a scalpel to Susie. I turned to Susie and marked off where the incision was to be made. He didn't say a word. I carefully laid the sharp edge of the scalpel to the top of the mark

and hesitated, hoping he would take over. All of the onlookers grew silent, but Dr. Troop didn't move. I made a very straight and true skin incision, clamped off a couple of squirting bleeders and had immediate confidence in myself. I could do the Caesarian section. I was ready to make the cut through the abdominal wall, and bless his soul, he said, "Mr. Baker, you can be proud of your skin incision, but I had better take it from here."

Dr. Troop went to work, as the tried and experienced surgeon he was, and had the afterbirth-coated calf out and into the hands of the other senior assistants in record time. The assistants went to work on the calf, the important part of this surgery. They looked like a bunch of mid-wives cleaning up a newborn baby. The slimy afterbirth was removed from the nostrils and mouth and artificial respiration was performed by wiping the frail calf's chest with soft towels. Within seconds the calf took a deep breath and cried its first baby cry. Cheers came from the observers, "It's alive!"

The applause from the observers startled Susie. The calf's cry brought Susie to a mother's alert and she answered her newborn with a soft moo. The calf started to flail its' broom handle sized legs in all directions, in his efforts to stand. The assistants gently picked him up and placed him on his unsteady feet in front of Susie.

He swayed and wobbled as Susie's long tongue went to work licking her calf as only the mother animal's licking instinct can do to stimulate their newborn.

I never cease to be amazed at the results produced by the mother's licking. The newborn gains strength and heads for a nipple and the all important first milk. This calf was no different, it gained strength and headed for the milk. Dr. Troop was in its way. The good doctor very softly ordered the assistants to take the calf to the other side of Susie and out of his way. I don't recall his exact words but his dry humor came forth with the order, "Fellows, the calf is ambidextrous, it can suck on a tit from either

side, now move the calf out of my way."

Dr. Troop finished suturing the uterus and then the abdominal wall, leaving only the skin incision to be sutured. He turned to me and said, "Carl, you made the hole, so you get to close it." He pulled off his gloves and gown and said, "It's my lunch time. Do a good job putting those sutures in." and he was gone.

All of the observers went with him out of surgery, leaving the senior assistants to finish the job. I closed the skin like I knew what I was doing, but it took me a lot longer to put sutures in than it did Dr. Troop. The job was finally finished and I had to brag on my part of the Caesarian section, it looked good.

That long one hour of time when I assisted Dr. Troop getting a calf from the protective walls of it's mothers womb into a breathing creature, didn't make me a surgeon but it established an attitude a surgeon must have. The attitude that every living thing has value and each and every time a scalpel is placed in the surgeon's hand a living breathing valued life accompanies it.

The next day Susie and her calf were doing quite well, so Susie went back to her farm home and the bull calf went to South America.



## SMALL ANIMAL RECEIVING

Monday morning my group of seniors will start our senior internship in small animal receiving. The knee boots and coveralls from large animal medicine will be put aside and I'll don a white shirt, tie, white jacket, and polish my shoes to look the part of a doctor. The next two weeks will be a breeze. I'll show up for school at nine and I'll be finished by three without worrying about coming back to the hospital for evening treatments. I'll be greeting the pet owners, getting a medical history of their pets, taking temperatures, and outlining what I think needs to be done to diagnose and treat the pet's ailment. The receiving veterinarian will then examine the pet and recommend to the owners what he thinks should be done for their pet. Receiving is good training for what we 'almost' veterinarians will be doing on our own in a few months.

Dr. White is the receiving veterinarian and I'm looking forward to working with this very smart veterinarian and nice guy.

Dr. White started our first day in small animal receiving with his 'You are in a new section lecture'. "You might think what I'm saying is redundant, but you must look and act like an educated professional in order to be treated as one. You will soon be full fledged veterinarians and if you ever want to get rid of the negative connotations of being called a 'horse doctor' you must be a professional. You will wear dress trousers, white shirt, tie, and white waist length lab jackets, and your shoes will shine like you were standing in a military inspection. You veterans show the

youngsters how to spit polish their shoes.

Gentlemen, you all look very good this Monday morning, but there are a few shoes which still need a little more brushing. I spent a few years in the Air Force and I will be as demanding here as I was there. Now, on to what you will be doing. All of you should know that people who are bringing animals to us for treatment must come up the long ramp which leads from the street level to our second floor working level. You will see them and you will greet them at the front door. You will then get the paperwork completed, do your preliminary checkups, and have the animal on an examination table, waiting for me to arrive. I'll be there as soon as the hectic times permit, but you interrupt what I'm doing if a life threatening emergency comes in. You are still students, but at times you will be put into situations not taught from a text book. I'll do my best to teach you the hands on method of dealing with the daily problems of being a veterinarian."

The nine o'clock Monday morning rush seemed to appear out of nowhere and the seniors were coming and going at Dr. White's orders. Eleven o'clock rolled around and there were no more patients for Dr. White to see, so he excused himself and headed back to his office. The seniors watched and at about eleven-thirty, an old couple came slowly creeping up the ramp, leading a dog that was so fat it looked like a barrel with four wobbly legs. The dog and the couple eventually made it to the door. To my surprise the couple and the dog would need to be classified as middle aged, not old. The fat, puffing dog had been going as fast as he could but was moving so slowly they all looked old and feeble. The seniors followed Dr. White's orders, but it took two of us to finally get the pork barrel-type dog up on the examination table. The owners gave us 'almost doctors' a scanty medical history in a manner of mistrust. I really couldn't blame them for the attitude, after all they brought their pet to see a veterinarian, not a student. They let us take the fat dog's temperature. I didn't have time to get my brain working toward a

diagnosis when Dr. White entered the room. He gasped a little when he saw the size of his patient. The owners gave Dr. White a medical history which covered symptoms of every disease I had ever studied. Dr. White listened and was his usual methodical self with his examination. He finally started talking to the owners.

"Folks, I've checked your dog and think I have the curing medicine. The treatment will not require any laboratory tests, x-rays, or hospital time. I'll write you a prescription."

All the seniors were at a loss. What did Dr. White see so quickly that we didn't? We quietly shrugged our shoulders at each other in the 'I don't have the slightest idea' fashion. We watched Dr. White meticulously print his orders on the prescription pad. We were wondering what the heck he was doing. His prescriptions are usually barely legible.

"Folks, I've printed this prescription so there will be no chance for error. You will take this prescription to the lumber yard and they will fill it for you."

'What has happened to Dr. White?' I couldn't help but think he was going back to the 'horse doctor' method of treating rather than true science. Dr. White put the prescription on the edge of the exam table, which was the only open spot not occupied by the fat dog, and started talking to the owners. We seniors stayed back and watched.

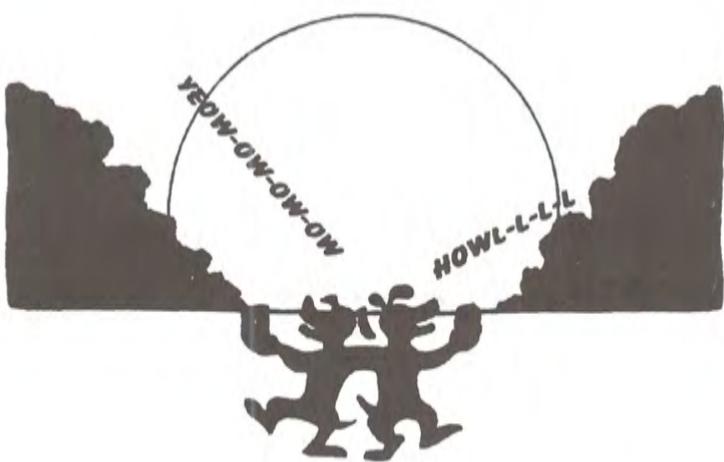
"Folks, read the prescription along with me just to make sure you understand. The prescription is an order for two pieces of dowel rod one-quarter of an inch thick and three feet long. It also says to mark them 'His' and 'Hers'. The man at the lumber yard can't write all the directions on your personalized dowel rods, so I'm telling you how I want them used. Ma'am, when you see your husband feeding your dog snacks, you will hit him with your dowel rod. Sir, you will do the same when you see her feeding your fat dog extra food. The dowel rods will probably show wear quickly, if they are being used as directed. Folks, your dog couldn't get this fat from regular feedings of dog food. You will

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know who is guilty and both of you are probably snack feeders. You are making your dog sick with all the extra food. I hope you understand that you are killing your dog with kindness, and all of the medicines in the world cannot heal your dog. You must use your sticks or bury your dog."

Dr. White thanked the people for bringing their loving pet to the veterinary clinic, excused himself and went for his lunch.





## APPLESAUCE DOGS

"I don't believe a word of that story. Doc, you can't be telling the truth. It couldn't happen to a dog the way you're trying to say it did."

"Joe, you can be the most miserable person in the world to talk to at times, and you're worse when you think someone is trying to put something over on you. There you are calling me a liar before I even have a chance to finish the story. So, if you want to hear about the applesauce dogs I'll start over, but don't ask for the lady's name to verify the story. I won't give it to you."

"Go ahead, Doctor, I'll listen, but listening doesn't mean believing."

"Joe, you know my home phone number is listed in the phone book, and I go out to see animals at any time of the day or night if there is an emergency. The week after New Year's Day, January the fourth to be exact, I got one of those emergency calls when I was at home for lunch. You know my wife, Babs. Well, she and Mrs. L. have talked on the phone several times about different animal problems and they have become sort of telephone buddies. Mrs. L. told Babs she would rather call and talk to her about sick animals than call the office because she didn't want to bother the busy doctor. Babs tried to explain to Mrs. L., several times, that she was only a veterinarian's wife not a veterinarian. Mrs. L. would always answer her with, 'You have lived with a veterinarian for a long time and should know more than a secretary.' Anyway, this time when Mrs. L. called, Babs stopped her with, 'Carl's at home for lunch you can talk to him while I fin-

ish getting his lunch ready."

Mrs. L. started telling me about how sick her dogs were. "The little one, Iris, would vomit and then she would lie down and within a few minutes she made fruitless efforts trying to get back up onto her feet. Doc, one time after exerting extreme effort, she made it to her feet and staggered toward the outside door but vomited before she made it across the kitchen. Oh, bless her heart, she doesn't want to mess in the house. She is trying again, but can't get up to vomit. She is getting worse, she's wallowing in her mess."

"Mrs. L., what is your big dog, Tex, doing?"

"He vomited and then laid down and wants to sleep, but I won't let him. He vomited some of the 'offal' type stinking, reddish-brown stuff, but I don't think it was blood."

"What does Iris' vomit look like?"

"It looks the same as the stuff Tex is vomiting. Doc, my dogs have been poisoned!"

"Is there any diarrhea or blood being passed?"

"No, they're just vomiting!" she screamed at me.

"From what you have told me it sounds like they got into something when they were out last night or this morning."

"Doc, the dogs stayed in all night and they only had dog food for breakfast. They were out in the yard for an hour or so and they couldn't have gotten into anything. Oh! Maybe someone tossed something over the fence and poisoned my dogs. What can I do?"

"How could that happen? You live back off the road. Anyway, I'll need to see them. How long will it take you to get them to the hospital?"

"Doc, the six inches of snow that gave us our white Christmas is melting pretty fast in this Indian Summer weather and is creating a sea of mud for us farm folks to plow through. The four wheel drive should make it through the river of mud, which we once called our gravel lane. The trip should take about thirty-

five minutes."

"I'll have time to eat and get back to the office before you can get there. Get started down the road, gal."

Joe interrupted, "Were you going to eat after talking about all that vomiting?"

"Veterinarians learn to live with all kinds of odors and eat when they can, if they plan on staying in practice."

"Doc, what did you have for lunch?"

"I had the usual, a sandwich, a slice of pineapple with cottage cheese and a glass of milk. I eat the same thing every day."

"Did she get the poisoned dogs to the hospital in time?"

"Yes, she made it in thirty-five minutes. The receptionist brought Mrs. L., carrying Iris, into the exam room. I took Iris and Mrs. L. went back to the truck for Tex. I almost laughed when I saw her coming back toward the exam room. She had Tex tethered with a heavy chain leash to hold his head up while she used her leg against his rib cage to keep him from falling. The chain looked so out of place on the poor dog. Tex came staggering and falling over his own feet into the exam room with a snicker-type smile on his face. She was choking him with the leash, but when she relaxed the leash he stumbled and sank to the floor. He laid there with a silly grin on his face."

"Iris seemed to be the sickest of the two with her dazed facial expression as she sprawled out on the towel-covered exam table. She tried to get up but her legs would just kick the towel, causing her to roll over and a 'what happened to me look' appeared on her face."

"I didn't know what kind of poison would cause these symptoms but I did know they had gotten into the same stuff. I had to do something. I looked into Iris' eyes and mouth and immediately had the diagnosis. Just to make sure, I had Mrs. L. hold Iris while I bent down to check Tex. I interrupted his snoring when I lifted his head to check his mouth odor. I was right, both had gotten into the same stuff."

"I had a big smile on my face when I announced, 'Gal, your dogs are drunk! They are stoned out of their minds! They are as drunk as any town drunk could get.'"

"Doctor Baker, I want you to know I am a Southern Baptist and allow NO alcoholic beverages in my house. Now, tell me what is really wrong with my dogs."

"Joe, there she was questioning my diagnosis. She was actually accusing me of avoiding the truth as if I was trying to hide something from her. I'm sure she had only one thought in her mind about her dogs, 'They were going to die from some horrible deadly poison.' I sort of ordered her to 'BEND DOWN AND SMELL THEIR BREATH!' She gave me a puckered up face look of 'I can't put my nose down to a dog's nose and sniff it's breath.' I raised my voice a little and repeated my order to smell their breath. She finally bent down, but I didn't think she could smell anything with her face tightened up into a bunch of wrinkles."

"She raised her head and asked, 'What kind of poison makes a dog's breath smell like alcohol? Doctor, there is no way they could get an alcoholic drink in my house! They have been poisoned.'"

"Mrs. L. I didn't say they had an alcoholic drink, I said they had gotten alcohol and they are drunk. I don't think you gave your dogs booze, but they got alcohol some way and you must find the source or they will do it again."

"I was really thinking that Mrs. L.'s husband had dumped out his leftover booze from a hunting trip, before he got caught with it in the house, and the dogs had gotten into it."

"You told me you hadn't been out since the snow, so there must be something in the house or yard. What have you done differently in the last few days? With Christmas and New Year's just past something must be different. Did you have any houseguests who might have left something the dogs could have gotten into? Think like a detective. Recreate the goings on at the farm."

"Doctor, I only had family over and all they left was leftovers in the refrigerator which I cleaned out four days ago. It's our tradition that my husband always watches the football games all day on New Year's Day and I clean out the refrigerator."

"Was there anything unusual cleaned out of the refrigerator? What did you do with the leftovers?"

"I put the leftovers on the compost pile in the back of our backyard. The compost pile was frozen, so I piled the stuff on top of the snow to mix in later when it thawed."

"What was the stuff you dumped?"

"Oh, there was a little dab of this and a little dab of that, and almost a full dish of applesauce. I had made some extra applesauce for Christmas, but the family only ate a little bit. They said it wasn't sweet enough so I threw it on the compost pile with everything else."

"Gal, I'll bet you got your dogs drunk on your applesauce! Now, take your dogs home and let them sober up. Check your compost pile when you get home."

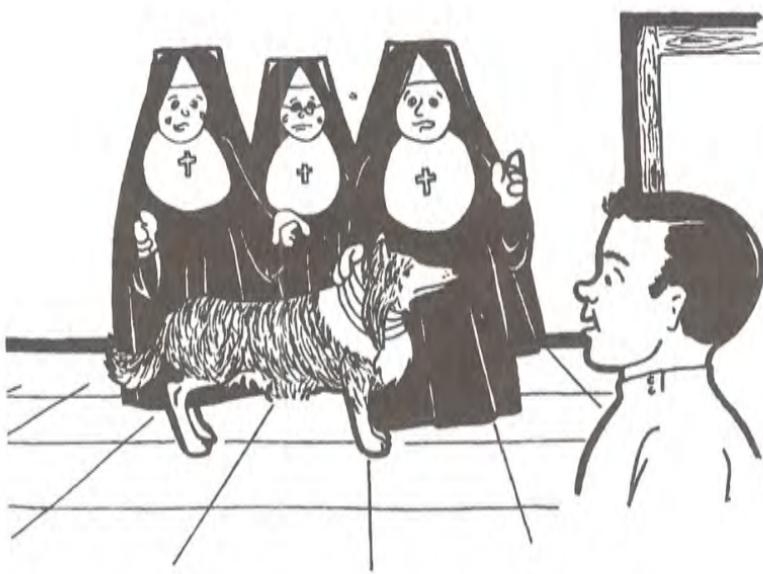
"On the way out the door she turned and firmly warned me, 'Doc, you better not tell anyone I got my dogs drunk!'"

"She called back later and told us the compost pile had thawed and the applesauce had been eaten. She also gave us her husband's explanation of what happened to the applesauce. He said, 'The warm spell we have had the past few days, along with the sun beaming in on the applesauce, caused the fermentation; just like making hard cider.'"

"I couldn't help but believe my first thought about her husband dumping out his leftover booze from the hunting trip but now I think it was poured on the applesauce. W-E-L-L ..... then again it might have only been the hard cider applesauce."

"Now, Joe, that's the way it happened. I'm not going to tell you who Mrs. L. is because drinking booze is against her religion and you are a blabbermouth!"

"Okay, Doc, it's a farfetched story but I believe you because you're not smart enough to make it up."



## PARKING LOT DOG

"Doctor Baker, there is a troop of nuns in the waiting room with a bleeding dog. What do you want me to do with them?"

The assistant, Paul, had found me in the back room of the hospital where I was trying to scrub my hands and arms clean of the yellow stain and odor from a sulfur dip. As careful as I try to be when working with the sulfur dip on a dog, they always manage to get some on me. The mangy dog that I had just dipped got the stuff on my arms and down into my gloves. Anyway, Paul found me.

My first thoughts were, "This must be some kind of joke, and I wasn't in a joking mood. Nuns don't have dogs! Paul wasn't showing the normal excitement he shows when a life or death emergency comes into the hospital. Was this a joke on the new veterinarian? Me! I had only been in Pittsburgh a few weeks and the employees hadn't seen me in a nasty mood, but Paul was about to see my nasty side. In my roughest 'I'm not playing games voice' I ordered Paul to get the dog and the nuns into an examination room. Paul didn't like to get blood on his clothes, so I told him to take an ice pack with him to apply to the bleeding area. I got a subdued 'okay' from him. I thought that I would finish their joke with a parting, "I'll be there as soon as I finish washing my hands." Only to receive a "Please hurry, Doc."

I was drying my hands as I entered the exam room and to my surprise the small exam room was filled with nuns. Two nuns were holding a dog on the exam table and Paul was pressing the

ice pack against the blood soaked hair on the neck of a smiling, mix breed collie dog. I was glad to see a smile on the injured dog's face rather than the frightened, biting, 'Don't get near me' expression usually seen with injured animals.

One of the nuns said, "We call him Park which is short for Parking Lot Dog." The dog's name and the nuns seemed a bit out of place in a veterinarian's office. I didn't have the time to stop and ask the 'whys' or the Sisters' names. I had a bleeding emergency needing immediate care. It wasn't a joke.

Park was trying to get up after hearing his name but Paul held his head down while the two nuns struggled to hold the remaining parts of the dog on the table.

Park's big brown eyes made eye contact with mine which sent a guilty feeling through me. He was asking and telling me with that one look, "What kept you so long, Doc? And now that you're here, how about stopping my bleeding?"

I gently lifted the ice pack to see the source of the bleeding. As I released the pressure of the ice pack from Park's neck he immediately started shaking his head and slinging blood droplets in all directions. I quickly reapplied the ice pack and had Paul hold Park's head down to stop him from throwing blood all over the nuns and the exam room.

One quick peek was all I needed to tell me what had happened and what would need to be done. Someone had been cutting out mats of hair from behind Park's ear and cut out a hunk of skin along with the mat. I would be doing surgery to correct a mistake someone had made while grooming this dog, the four inch gash in his neck had to be sutured.

The nun who was crying the hardest choked off her crying long enough to tell us she had cut Park's throat and then resumed her sobbing. The two nuns holding Park's rear were doing a good job of holding, but one had turned her head in the other direction to avoid looking at Park's bloody mess. The other nun holding

Park was looking at me with an expression I had seen several times before I'm going to be sick.' Her facial communication was more convincing than I had ever seen before. She had her eyes squinted, her lips, nose and facial muscles were puckered into a very convincing watch out I'm going to vomit. The sight of Park's blood and a whiff of the stinking mange medicine had made her sick. Evidently my scrubbing didn't get my hands and arms free of the sulfur odor. I didn't need her vomiting on me or Park so with a loud voice I ordered her to get outside for some fresh air. I felt a little guilty for raising my voice to a nun, but I didn't have the time to amend my rude actions. There were three people who were tired of struggling with a bleeding dog. I got an injection of a pre-anesthetic into Park and waited for its sedating action.

The other two nuns in the exam room were consoling the crying nun and I then took the time to tell the crying nun that she had only cut Park's skin, not his throat. I felt so sorry for her but I couldn't do anything to help relieve her guilty feelings. I told her to go check on the sick nun outside. I then started barking out orders to the receptionist to help the nuns clean up and to get the needed information for our records.

I was off to surgery knowing the receptionist would do a good job of explaining how the fine hair from behind Park's ears matted up and had pulled the thin skin into the center of the mat. The nun will know how she pulled the mat up and cut it off with the scissors along with the entrapped skin. I hope the receptionist tells the nun that she wasn't the first to do it and that she wouldn't be the last.

We put Park under a surgical anesthetic and clamped off the squirting bleeders. Then proceeded with the surgical clipping and scrubbing which is the biggest part of repairing this kind of wound. Park's wound was typical for a mat-skin cutting wound and would be easily sutured.

The nuns were gone, the surgical repair was completed, Park was in recovery, and now it was time for me to find out what

a troop of nuns was doing with a dog named Parking Lot Dog.

The receptionist had quite a story to tell me. The nuns were from the Children's Hospital and the dog is from their parking lot where he had taken up residency and became a member of that closely knit family. Park had won his family membership by being a performer in the parking lot of the hospital. As the story goes the children named him by constantly asking, "Is the parking lot dog out today?"

Park was quite a performer and entertainer on his parking lot stage. When the children watched him from their hospital rooms, Park would bounce and romp around and play in the parking lot. He seemed to know when there were children watching and loved their responses. 'Dr. Park' knew that he was part of the children's medication and gave it with a smile on his face and a wagging tail through the heat of the summer and the coldest days of winter. The nuns knew Park's value to the children. The children seemed to forget their illnesses for a few minutes. The nuns made sure Park was fed and cared for but he wasn't allowed into the hospital to visit the children. The nurses also saw the benefits of the performing dog and would push the children's beds close to the windows for better viewing. Park accepted his place as the 'doctor' in the parking lot.

The parking lot dog story pulled tears from the eyes of this veterinarian. I made sure all vaccinations were up to date and even bought a license for him. I listed the owner of Park as the children of Children's Hospital.

The next day our groomer did an extra special job of cleaning and grooming Park. There wasn't a mat or tangle to be found. When the nuns returned to pick him up their long faces of the prior day turned to smiles as Park bounced into the room. Park pranced around to each nun showing off his sutures. After I gave the nuns my instructions about the after surgery care, they tried to pay us the money which had been donated for Park's care. We refused. I told the nuns my service was a donation to 'Dr. Park's'

efforts to medicate some children in his own special way. I asked them to put those donations to good use at the hospital.

The nuns brought Park back a week later for his check up and suture removal. The nuns also brought along a lengthy, handmade thank you card from the children. There were many signatures in childlike writing and some cute notes about how Park was missed when he was in the dog hospital.

The one note that said "Parking Lot Dog got out of the dog hospital sooner than I can get out of the Children's Hospital." brought tears to my eyes.

Many years have passed since I was trying to scrub the stink from my hands and I thought a joke was being pulled on me. I have often caught myself questioning the Good Lord for His whys and get the 'Yours is not to reason why' answer. I must remind myself that the Good Lord works in mysterious ways and my being a veterinarian must be one of those mysterious ways.



## VACATION JOSEPH

"Babs, do you remember where the pictures of Joseph are? I know it has been several years since I've seen them, but I thought you might remember where those old dog pictures might be."

"Carl, you just walked in from work and started talking about some old dog pictures. Something must have set you off today, but wouldn't a 'Hi, how are you?' been a little better greeting?"

"I'm sorry, dear. Hi, how are you? A strange thing happened at the clinic today?"

"Hi, Carl. I'm fine and how are you? Now, what strange thing happened to you today?"

"I'm fine. Today I examined a dog that looked just like Joseph."

"What's so strange about that? Over the years you have mentioned seeing dogs that looked like Joseph several times."

"What makes today's incident so weird is this pup was picked up along the roadside in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. If you remember Joseph got his second try at life after he was picked up along the roadside in Myrtle Beach. It must be fate or else I've been practicing veterinary medicine too many years. The world must be coming around to meet me again. All those years ago when I met a dog in Myrtle Beach and today I met what must be his great, great, great grandson in my clinic. It sure seems odd to me, both dogs were saved under similar conditions and I meet them in locations which are seven hundred miles apart. Oh, boy, did today's meeting have me re-visiting my memory land. What do you

think?"

"Carl, it must be fate because only one dog could be like Joseph, but strange things do happen. You have had your share of strange things to happen, but I have always blamed your being a veterinarian as the cause. Anyway, that was seventeen years ago, and yes, I do remember the pictures. You can find them in an old shoebox in a back corner of the attic. I can't help but ask what in the world do you want with those old dog pictures?"

"I told the people about meeting Joseph and his pictures. They want to see them and I might put them in the book I'm writing."

"Did you get anything done at the office today or did you just talk about Joseph?"

"Oh, I got some work done but I must confess to talking about Joseph a great deal. My memory bank was stirred up by this new puppy from Myrtle Beach. My thoughts seemed to zoom in on those days of long ago when we vacationed at Myrtle Beach. I'll bet I told half a dozen people about Joseph. Today my day seemed to be half work and half telling my clients about the vacation when I met Joseph."

"Carl, I'd rather look for the pictures the next time I'm in the attic than have you digging into everything up there. You might finish writing your book by the time I get the courage to go into the attic again. Anyway, as I recall, the pictures aren't very good. I doubt if you will be able to use them in your book or want to show them to anyone."

"The pictures can be omitted, but how in the world do I write a story about a dog like Joseph and our family vacation without boring people to death?"

"Carl, were the people you talked to today bored? Did they share your vacation and your meeting Joseph with any interest or were they trying to get their pet out of the examination room? If the people were being anything more than polite and courteous, they enjoyed your story. If they enjoyed your vacation story, put

it in the book."

"Babs, that was a good vacation. All of us had a good time doing what we wanted to do and were not a burden on each other. I met Joseph, his owner, and enjoyed the ocean. You're right, the vacation and meeting Joseph should write it's own story. You just gave me the name of the story, 'Vacation Joseph'. All I need to do is go back seventeen years and put the experience into written form. Here goes!"

I never seem to have enough time or the interest to plan vacations so Babs plans the trips and I enjoy them. I remember pieces and bits of most of our vacations but the vacation of seventeen years ago is as clear as if it were happening this very minute. That one week of vacation on Myrtle Beach gave me a lifetime of wonderful memories.

Babs had the vacation set for Myrtle Beach. We had vacationed there several times before and every member of the family had come home tired, but happy. Babs and our girls always enjoyed the sun on the beach along with the stores. I have always been captivated by the ocean's mysteries, not shopping. The ocean has a magnetic force which pulls me into hours of watching blue waves roll and their white caps gently splashing their way into gentle trickles on the white sandy beach. The little birds darting toward the receding ocean to gobble up the goodies dropped onto the beach by the last rich wave and then they dart away from the next incoming wave to avoid being gulped up by the ocean. The giant ocean seems to purposely avoid capturing the birds. The ocean is nature in its highest form of wonderful mystery.

Over the years the ocean has given me hours of complete mental rest while allowing my imagination to run in any direction it cares to without causing havoc in real life. Babs doesn't pick the beach every year but she does when I need the perfect place to rest.

Babs had everything packed and ready to head down the

vacation road except for our pets which had to be taken to my office for boarding. I always get the job of catching the pets when we are going out of town. First, I must get the hissing cat from under the bed and then the two poodles. The pitiful whining and crying ritual of protest is voiced by both dogs in their efforts to intimidate me. It is tough to leave pets behind but no pets are allowed in the rented beach house. I know the dogs and the cat will get excellent loving care but it is always like leaving a crying member of the family behind. We shed a few tears as we say our farewells to the cat and dogs.

The drive usually takes me about nine hours but the girls will shorten old Dad's trip by doing some of the driving this year. I should be able to see a few things between naps. The first leg of our trip is through southern West Virginia and Virginia where Mother Nature displays the beautiful greens of summer in her full 'Mountain Fashion' and then into the fertile farming country of the Carolinas. There are a few large cities which get in our way before the final leg of the trip and there is the ocean.

We find the beach house but are a little disappointed. It is not on the beach. This house is one walking block from the ocean. We get our stuff unloaded. The tiring trip has everyone ready for bed. We will go to the beach tomorrow, it is just too dark to see anything, anyway. The first day of our vacation is over. I sleep like a log.

The first day trip of the vacation kept me sleeping until eleven on the second day. I hadn't slept that late in years. Babs and the girls are coming in from the beach when I decide to roll out of bed. She fixes a lazy snack for the girls along with a breakfast-lunch for me. The sun is too hot for my unbaked skin on the beach today so I sit on the porch and do nothing -- nothing but vacation. The ocean watching from the porch isn't as interesting as from the beach, so I nap and loaf. The girls had to go into town to see if there were any new stores, and probably boys, while Babs tinkered with some housekeeping. It wasn't too difficult for me to loaf a-

way the hot day into darkness. A bite to eat, a good book, and I head toward bed and another night of extended sleep without a telephone ringing.

The third day was different. I was awake at five AM. It was like awaking for my regular work day. It was still dark. The sun hadn't bothered to get up yet. I had to get out of bed before my rolling around had Babs awake. I couldn't roust around the rented house or I'd have Babs and the girls awake. I decided to walk the beach and watch the sun come up.

As carefully quiet as I can be, dressed in sandals, swimming trunks and a light sweater, I ease my way out of the house and head for the beach. The flickering street lights illuminate my way. As my feet hit the sandy edge of the ocean, the skies blacken. The pre-dawn moon and stars are all I have to guide my beach steps.

I stop and close my eyes for a few seconds to allow my eyes to adjust to the darkness, but I have a Korean War flashback. I remember the blackest nights in the world. The nights were so dark in South Korea that a lightless coal mine couldn't be darker. I blink my eyes, then hold them closed allowing the sounds of a Korean summer night to filter into my ears. I hear the sounds of bugs and birds blending with the scratchy sounds generated by the soft Korean wind blowing the leaves of the scrubby little bushes on the rough, stony hillside. Korea was years ago. Why does my memory revert back to those long ago, and all but forgotten, days? I open my eyes and those noises heard in the pre-dawn Korean flashback are gone. The ocean roar silenced the memory and brought me back to the how and whys of a flashback. The similarity of the roars of war and the roars of the ocean must have caused the flashback.

The ocean wind carries the fluctuating ocean sounds in roaring tones which are only penetrated by the screaming, worrisome sounds of those little birds which are continually darting around as beach scavengers. The seagull's caw reminds me of the ugly black crow's bragging caws as they raid a field of freshly

planted corn. The gulls and crows must be bleating out some coded message to their fellow birds. The palm trees are waving their leaves at fellow trees while the very noisy ocean is rolling another soft, whitecapped wave onto the soft sandy beach. The night noises of this far from home place are so different from those heard in rural southern Ohio. It is a different world.

My eyes are slowly adapting to the darkness as the dimmed moon and stars gain brightness. I can see dim lights which extend out into the ocean off to my left. Oh, well, my mind is back to today so I might as well walk toward the mysterious lights. The sun should be up by the time I get to those lights. I'll watch the sunrise over the ocean and see if the changing colors of the dawn breaking are similar to what we see back home.

I dared to walk up close to the tip of the waves' edge. They gently splash at my ankles. The water is too cool for my early morning comfort. I move away from the splashing waves. The skies are turning blackish gray and the lights I'm walking toward are fading into the early day leaving an outline of a pier jutting out into the ocean. I'll walk to the pier and then turn back for breakfast.

I brought my slow pace to a quick halt as a large, yellow dog came toward me. The dog blocked my next step. He didn't appear mean or aggressive. I waited for his next move, not knowing what this big yellow Golden Retriever/Labrador cross breed with a stick in his mouth was going to do. He introduced himself with a big friendly smile and a very fast, wagging tail. He was demanding to be recognized as a fellow beach walker.

"Well, good morning, yellow dog. What are you doing out this early? Is your owner out walking the beach?" I was talking to this dog like I had known him for years and he listened as if an important person was talking to him. I could see no one in the early dawn light, so I baby talked with my new acquaintance.

"Okay, dog with the stick in your mouth, let's walk up the beach." To my surprise he moved to my side and we slowly

strolled along the sandy beach without a care in the world. The skies were lightening into a gray-blue hue. We arrived at the long fishing pier which extended way out into the ocean. We could see fishermen along with their fishing poles silhouetted in the early morning sunrise and their fading, flickering kerosene lanterns perched on the pier. I wondered if they were catching anything.

"Dog, this is as far as I go. It's time to turn around and start back for breakfast." I started to retrace my footsteps and the dog blocked my path again, but this time he laid his stick down in a manner that said it was my turn to carry the load.

I picked up his tongue polished ,two-inch by eight-inch stick and he ran ahead of me down the beach. He stopped and gave me a look that asked, "Are you going to throw the stick?"

So I threw the stick and he retrieved it very neatly and placed it at my feet to be thrown again. The dog was teaching me his game of 'Stick'. I'll bet there have been several other vacationers who have walked this beach and played 'Stick' with this pushy, but polite, yellow dog.

The dog had me hooked on his game of stick as we continued down the sandy beach. The sky was turning pale blue. I tossed the stick a few more times and then teasingly walked past the stick he had laid down for me. I ignored the stick and kept walking down the beach. He picked up his stick and started walking a safe six feet away from me. He gave me an in-depth, puzzled look. He slowly, but suspiciously, edged his way nearer to me as we continued our walk.

He edged in close enough to nudge my hand with his stick to get my attention. "Do you want to play some more stick?"

I took hold of the stick lightly and he jerked it away with a big smile on his face. He was returning the teasing. We walked a little more and he eased in again and touched my hand with his stick. I took a firm grip on the stick this time and we played tug of war. I turned loose and he dropped the stick in front of me to play 'Stick' again. The yellow dog retrieved the stick a few more times

and then after another throw, he picked up his stick and was gone.

The next morning I was up at five again so I went for my dark-of-the-morning walk. The yellow dog showed up with his 'Good Morning' smile, his polished stick, and a wag on his tail as he joined me in my walk toward the pier.

The yellow dog wanted more personal attention today than he allowed yesterday. I patted him on the head and he increased his pace. The yellow dog noticed that I wasn't keeping up with him so he returned to my side and maintained my slower pace. He gradually slipped ahead again, arriving at our turn around spot of yesterday. He was twenty yards ahead of me when he turned and headed back toward our starting point but he blocked my forward pathway as he tried to get me to turn around and head back down the beach..

He looked back over his shoulder at the pier and gave me a look of, "I've been there so you can turn around and start back down the beach." He dropped his stick at my feet and bounced around trying to get me to play stick. I started back toward breakfast. We played stick along with some tug of war, as we did yesterday. He came to the spot where he left our walk yesterday and without fanfare he picked up his stick and was gone.

Over the breakfast table I told the family of my walking playmate and my plans to look for him today. Everyone at the table had seen a big yellow dog a short distance down the beach sharing the shade of a big beach umbrella with an older lady.

I had my shower and morning nap before proceeding down the beach, searching for the yellow dog. There they were. The lady was stretched out on a beach lounge and the yellow dog was napping on a beach blanket under the big beach umbrella. I had to meet the owner of such a wonderful beach-walking dog. I walked toward the sleeping couple to introduce myself. The big yellow dog came to full guard duty alert. His shuffling around awakened the lady. He recognized me with a smile and then looked at the lady, giving her his approval of me. They exchanged glances with

him giving her his nod of assurance that she could handle this guy, as he curled up on his beach blanket to continue his nap.

"Hi, I am Doctor Baker, a veterinarian from southern Ohio. Please excuse my forwardness, but I had to meet the yellow dog's owner. We are early morning beach-walking buddies."

"Hi, Doc. His name is Joseph and I was waiting for his walking buddy to find me. Joseph always finds someone at pre-dawn to walk with and play his stick game. He knows someone will be walking the beach and watching the sun come up. Most of Joseph's beach walking buddies come looking for me and we talk about my dog. Have a chair out of the hot sun."

"I don't mean to intrude on your day, I just wanted to meet the yellow dog's owner."

"Seat yourself, young man, and I'll have Joseph go get you a cold beer."

"No, thank you. I don't care for a beer."

"Well, I do. Joseph, go get me a lite beer."

Joseph was off toward the house which was up on the embankment. It wasn't long before Joseph was back with the lady's beer. I was amazed at how tenderly he had his big teeth locked around the can, and he walked so gently there was no shaking of the can. I watched the lady pry open the beer can with her aging fingers, expecting the beer to shoot out but there was only a little fizz.

"How did he know to get a lite beer for you and how did he get it out of the refrigerator?"

"Doc, he is smart, but not that smart. I always show off my smart dog by sending him for a beer. If you would have wanted a beer, I would have hooked this canvas bag to his collar and my maid would know to send two beers in the bag. If there is no bag, the maid knows Joseph has come to get a beer for the old lady. She allows him to carry my can of beer in his mouth."

Joseph was peacefully sprawled out on his blanket and had resumed his napping. The lady and I talked like we had known

each other for ages, but knew we would never see each other again.

"A casual glance at the big yellow dog sprawled out in the shade of your beach umbrella might give passersby the wrong impression. People might think he is another spoiled mutt owned by a rich old lady."

"Doc, I don't give a darn what people think about my dog. He is my friend and companion and a very good guard dog. Let me tell you a little about this mutt, and by the way, I am the only one I permit to call him mutt. His name is 'Joseph' if you are talking about my dog."

"Tell me about Joseph."

"Doc, I found him along the road after he had been hit by a car. He was just a dirty little pup I picked up and saved his life from the killer cars. I know he remembers the hurting and the doctoring and he has returned my humane efforts many times over. I took that beat up puppy to a veterinarian and he put him back together. I named him Joseph, after the veterinarian."

"Did he charge you for the name?"

"Lands, no! But he is the one who started Joseph's early morning beach walks. The veterinarian ordered physical therapy for those injured legs, he wanted Joseph swimming and walking. The ocean became Joseph's cool whirlpool. We walked in the early morning to avoid the law enforcement people who chase the dogs off the beach during the day. So I cheated a little, allowing my dog to walk on the beach. Joseph got bigger and stronger without really hurting anyone with his ocean therapy. We continued our morning walks after his needed therapy was over. The early morning walks had become a very special time for us, seeing the world wake up."

I thought about the early mornings in Korea, and what it meant to me over the years. It takes a special time and condition to make the body carry deep, innermost feelings about one's self and the world throughout life.

"I understand your feelings."

"I have a bad heart and the doctors have shortened my walks. Joseph has continued his walking with his selected vacationing friends, and believe me, he is very selective."

"Sorry to hear you had to quit your morning walks, but your Joseph has added more pleasure to mine."

"Doc, he has been a very good friend and companion over these past ten years, but this heart thing has caused me to worry about his care after I am dead and gone."

I was surprised by her comment because it is just the reverse of what I usually hear. 'What am I going to do when my loving pet dies?' is the question I hear, and cannot answer, but realize an answer is often not wanted. I must have looked befuddled because the lady brought my thoughts back to the beach with, "Hey, Doc, come back to your vacation. You slipped away for a minute or two."

"I'm sorry, but what you said was too unusual for me not to think about things."

"It's okay, Doc. I have Joseph's future worked out with my attorney."

She went on telling me about how her attorney did a little rewriting of her will and she didn't have to worry about Joseph being cared for if she should die before him.

"You willed him all of your money?"

"Doc, you know better than that! It would take a good attorney about five minutes to break a will like that, then some worthless relative would end up with everything."

"I was just joking. You didn't leave me any room in our conversation except to try humor or sympathy, and you didn't need sob stories."

"Sorry, Doc, but this is very serious stuff with me, and your humor doesn't fit."

"I am sorry. Go ahead and tell me how your attorney worked things out."

"I won't go into the legal terms, but my maid knows the house on the beach is hers and Joseph's as long as Joseph is alive. The maid loves Joseph as I do and will care for him as long as she can keep him alive. She doesn't know who gets the house if Joseph dies. I've made it financially possible for her to take care of Joseph, and the attorney will give the house to her after Joseph dies, but she doesn't know about those arrangements."

"That was very nice of you, but your attorney must have done a little more than that."

"He did. To put it in simple terms, the maid will be paid each and every year that Joseph lives, and when he dies her salary stops. There is a great deal more but, basically, she gets paid only if Joseph lives a good life."

"It sure sounds like Joseph will be getting the best care that money can buy."

"Doc, I can't take it with me, but I can sure control how my money is being spent after I am gone."

"It sure looks like you are handling your medical problems quite well, and you have stopped to smell the roses while the fragrance is abundant."

"Thank you, Doctor Baker!"

"I'll PRAY for you. Joseph, I'll see you in the morning."





## JUST VISITING....I THOUGHT

I had just hung up the phone after talking to a teacher of mentally handicapped children. She created one of those times in my life where I must stop....stop and look back to what got me to where I am at this moment. She had called to thank me for something I had done yesterday that might have some effect on one of her students, maybe for the rest of a little girl's life. She called me at work. I worked for Dr. Perry at his dog and cat hospital at the time.

I went to the hospital kitchen, poured a cup of coffee and sat there at the kitchen table thinking and talking to myself about what I had been through yesterday afternoon. "Carl, you're just a farm boy who was educated to be a veterinarian and that was what you were doing yesterday, being a veterinarian. The teacher of handicapped children placed you in a position of being something more...more than what you are. You are a veterinarian who hasn't been out of school a year. You have a lot to learn before you can even think about being anything special."

Yesterday afternoon was my afternoon off and it was going to be something special. It turned out to be much more than I could have dreamed, but it was still only a day in the life of a veterinarian. I was going to meet a veterinarian who I knew only by the rumors I had been hearing for the last ten months at Dr. Perry's office. I was going to meet the notorious Dr. Bruce. Notorious by the rumors which had Dr. Bruce classed as a rough old codger with a foul mouth, but a heck of a good veterinarian.

I was going--ah visiting.

I walked into Dr. Bruce's office. It was small compared to Dr. Perry's. I introduced myself to his secretary. She asked me to be seated in the empty waiting room and she would tell Dr. Bruce I was there.

Dr. Bruce came into the waiting room drying his hands while introducing himself and welcoming me to his 'humble clinic'.

"Carl, lets go to my office and talk. I've finished my surgery for the afternoon."

I followed him to a little desk in the back corner of his waiting room and we sat down. "Carl, this place isn't large enough for me to have the luxury of a private office, so I share my office with the secretary and the people who are waiting to have their pets doctored."

We hit it off pretty well, I thought. I gave him my history of being raised on a farm and my hopes of having my own practice some day. I told him about my original plans of starting a large and small animal practice in southwestern Pennsylvania, but came to Huntington for small animal experience. I just poured out my personal history to him like he was a long lost brother.

He was different from the veterinarians in school and Dr. Perry and much different from the stories I had heard about him. I was pleasantly surprised at what a nice guy he was turning out to be, a real gentleman. His reputation was not true. He wasn't gruff or foul mouthed as I had heard.

It was a very nice visit. I was getting ready to leave when the secretary came over and sheepishly announced, "Pushy Peggy wants to talk to you, now! Honest, Doc, I tried to put her on your return call list."

Dr. Bruce picked up the phone with a very gruff, "How in the hell are you, Peg?" greeting to the caller, surprising me. Really, I was shocked hearing this gentleman of a few minutes ago now using those words. Well, I settled back in my chair and listened to another side of this man.

"Peg, you damn well know I don't treat large animals anymore. Remember back a few years ago, you talked me into treating one of your friend's horses and I got kicked in the knee. I haven't been able to treat large animals since that day."

After that outburst Dr. Bruce was turned into a listener by Peg. He was nodding his head in agreement while pointing a finger toward the phone and working his fingers and thumb up and down to mimic Peg's lips. She must have been rattling on. He finally interrupted her.

"Peg, hey, Peg! Peg, listen to me for a minute. I do understand a horse is down in the middle of a street and will draw a crowd and stop traffic, but I don't treat horses. Oh, Peg! I am looking across my desk at Dr. Baker and he does large animal work. He came to visit with me, but he will be there in ten minutes. He will help you. You make sure you have someone there to help him and I hope the Huntington Police are there by now."

Dr. Bruce turned to me as he put the telephone down, "You said you had the afternoon off and you were just out visiting, so you now have the Humane Society to visit with while I give my ear and tongue a little rest."

"Doctor, I only heard one side of that conversation and it sounded like you pawned me off to solve one of your nagging problems. Why do I need help and why should there be a need for police? What have you arranged for me to do?"

"Carl, I take care of the Humane Society's injured dogs and cats and now they have an injured horse who needs a veterinarian. There has been an accident in Guyandotte and I don't know what kind of vehicles were involved, but there is a horse down in the middle of the street needing veterinary care. I know you will need some physical help and a policeman to control the traffic and the people. I don't know what to tell you to expect from a crowd when there is an injured animal involved, but you will need help."

"Dr. Bruce, I have some of my large animal equipment in the trunk of my car, but I doubt if I have enough medicines for very much doctoring. I had a very long large animal night last night and I haven't re-stocked my medicines today."

"Carl, I told them you would be there in ten minutes so quit making excuses and get your butt moving."

"It has been nice meeting you, Dr. Bruce, but I think I will avoid you in the future especially if there is a telephone around. Just joking."

"Carl, I have enjoyed our little talk and I am sure you will have your work cut out for you today. Don't take any wooden nickels."

I drove into Guyandotte and there was a mob of people up ahead filling the street. There was my policeman, diverting the traffic out a side street. I stopped and told the policeman who I was and why I was there. He told me to go through the group of people and I would find an injured horse in the middle of the street. He went on to tell me about the horse trailer which had jackknifed, throwing the horse around and when the truck came to a halt the horse was half in and half out of the trailer.

The people opened a pathway for me to the pickup truck and horse trailer. A frail man and an aging woman were at my car before I could get the door open. They were telling me they were from the Humane Society and were there to help me. I hoped I wouldn't need them for muscle power.

I went to the horse trailer and found a mare down with her front half out of the trailer and her back half lying limp inside the trailer.

The poor mare was thrashing with her front legs while the back legs laid motionless. I had to do something to relieve her pain. I had just enough medicine to put her into a light sleep, but she would continue to toss her head if she heard a noise. I motioned to the crowd with my finger across my closed lips, asking for quiet. I was amazed as the crowd quieted to just whispers.

The driver of the truck came up to me and asked, "What are you going to do now, Doctor?"

I thought the first thing I should do is have him locked up for not having that horse properly secured in the trailer. This guy must have been balling the jack to cause so much damage to this mare when he wrecked. I had to keep my mouth shut and do my job. The police would do the locking up.

Ethics and laws govern what I can and can't do and getting the mare sedated was about all I could do without permission of the owner or orders from a humane officer.

"Mr. Truck Driver, I'll need permission from the owner or from you to do any more. Where is the owner?"

The driver refused to give me the okay to do anything. "Doctor, you must talk to the owner of the horse. The owner is at a race track two hundred miles up the road. I have a number where you can call him."

"Mr. Truck Driver, that policeman over there will get you to a phone and you call the owner. I will talk to him, if you find him. You can tell him there is a back injury and the horse will probably need to be destroyed. You go call and I'll watch the mare. Come and get me if he needs to talk to me. I feel more useful being here with the mare than I would hanging onto a telephone."

I watched the mare lay there and sleep, but wondered what I would do if the owner wasn't located.

The truck driver came back and told me the owner would not give permission to do anything. He had to talk to the veterinarian who had started treatment on his horse. All of a sudden I was the guy who caused the problem and was inconveniencing the owner.

"Hello, this is Doctor Baker. Are you the owner of this mare? Will you give me her lip tattoo number?"

"Yes, sir, I own the mare and the correct tattoo number is ----- Will you tell me what is wrong with my mare?"

"Sir, that number matches her tattoo. I think her back is broken and she will probably never walk again."

"Doctor, if she is in that bad of shape put her down, destroy her and do away with her remains."

"Sir, I don't know who I have on the other end of this telephone so I am going to give the phone to the Humane Officer. I want you to give him your name and address and whatever information you can about this mare. Sir, I'm at a disadvantage in this situation because I am not the Humane Society's regular veterinarian. I do large animal work and I am licensed in the State of West Virginia, if any question should come up in the future with your insurance company. I will file a written report with the Humane Society. It was their veterinarian who requested my service. I am sorry about your mare, but euthanasia is the only humane thing to do now."

Getting the potential legal stuff straightened out up front by agreeing to send a written report to the Humane Society seemed to satisfy the mare's owner. Now, the whole mess is back in my hands. I had to put the mare to sleep. I had to put her out of her misery before the sedation wore off. What am I to do with the crowd watching my every move.

I was ready to put the mare out of her misery and get her out of the street, but I had a problem. I didn't have any euthanasia solution with me and there were too many people around who might get hurt if I shot her. I had enough anesthesia with me to put her under to a surgical depth of anesthesia but not enough to kill her, and not enough time left on the sedation to keep her out while I went for the euthanasia solution. I had to do something in just a few minutes or have a bigger mess.

I told the people from the Humane Society, the police, and the truck driver the situation I was in -- trying to be humane without getting anyone hurt. I therefore planned on putting the mare into a deep surgical plane of anesthesia, load her back into the trailer and take her to the landfill where we could shoot and bury

her. Everyone agreed that was the most logical thing to do.

I anesthetized her and used all the help I could get to put her back into the trailer. I was closing the trailer door and much to my surprise, the crowd started to applaud as if I had done something very special. I didn't know what to think. Looking at their facial expressions told me they were personally involved with everything that had been done for the mare. I waved and headed for my car. My nasty job wasn't over yet, but the people headed for their homes satisfied with a job well done.

The police had the truck driver follow them to the landfill where I was to destroy the mare. I didn't have my gun with me and I didn't think a policeman would give his gun to anyone, so I asked him to shoot the mare.

What a story he gave me, but it ended with, "Doc, I've been a policeman for thirty years and haven't had to shoot anything but a target and I'm not starting now. I'll let you use my pistol, if you know how to shoot it, but I am not shooting the mare."

"Sir, I qualified in the Army with a .45 and I own a .38 similar to the one you carry, so if you will let me use your pistol, I'll put this mare out of her misery."

The policeman willingly handed me his pistol and I shot the mare. She was out of pain now.

The policeman's gun must have been as old as he was, it shaved the bullet. I had little pieces of lead embedded under the skin in my right arm. I wasn't very happy and told the policeman to junk his pistol. He replied with, "I'm going to retire next month and so will this pistol."

I was finished with this adventure, or so I thought. The remainder of my afternoon off was spent recovering from what I thought was going to be just visiting with another veterinarian. A gal from the newspaper called me at home for some information, that was all that interrupted the remainder of the day.

Friday morning started with the usual bowl of cereal and the morning newspaper. Oh, boy! There I was on the front page.

A six by eight inch picture and a story about me working on the mare. I didn't read the rest of the paper, I just looked at the picture with all the people in the background. The different facial expressions on each of these people seemed to tell a story of what was going through their minds. The picture picked up the worry and concern each individual had for the mare.

I ate my cereal and thought about making the front page, that was a first for me. I was a little proud and embarrassed at the same time. All I was doing was my job. I laughed when I thought what Mom would say if she were looking at the picture.

"Carl, you should have had your work clothes on and not be messing with those horses while wearing your good white shirt and tie."

When she sees the picture, I'll need to explain that I didn't have a choice. I had an injured horse who needed my attention and I had good clothes on when it started.

Front page or not, I had to go to work. Dr. Perry complimented me on looking very professional and thanked me for the free advertisement. The reporter had mentioned that I worked for Dr. Perry. The morning work was moving along quite well until the secretary interrupted with, "Dr. Baker, one of your fans wants to talk to you. She is on line two."

I couldn't figure out who would want to talk to me.

"Hello, this is Doctor Baker, how may I help you?"

"Doctor Baker, I am a school teacher. I teach handicapped children. I want to thank you for being so nice and to tell you about one of my students. Do you have a minute?"

"I have a little time before my next piece of surgery."

"Doc, this morning Alice came into class and was telling everyone her picture was on the front page of the paper. I hadn't seen her picture when I read the paper, so I didn't know what she was talking about. She had a paper under her arm so I asked her to show the students her picture. Alice unfolded her paper and laid it on my desk."

"See, there I am, on the front page."

"She was pointing at your picture, but there she was in the group of people who were watching you."

"May I tell the class about what the doctor did?"

"I gave her permission and she talked and talked about you and the horse. She told the class about all the shots you had given and even when you put your finger to your lips to have the people quiet down."

"Ma'am, I hope it didn't bother her when she learned I had to shoot the mare."

"Doc, she doesn't know. She only knows the horse was breathing when you closed the doors on the trailer so you could take the horse to the hospital."

"Ma'am, I didn't tell anyone I was taking the mare to a hospital."

"I don't know where she got the idea, but I am not going to tell her different. She only saw kindness and that is what she will remember."

"Ma'am, the story in the paper says I took the horse to a landfill and shot it. Don't you think she will find out what really happened?"

"I doubt it, Doc, but if she does I don't think it will bother her because she had her picture in the paper. Doctor, I called to thank you for being so kind to the horse yesterday and making at least one little girl feel very special."

"Thank you for calling."



## THE SHORT SCOTTIE WITH A LONG CHAIN

"Oh, Lord, why are you doing this to me?!" There I go asking the Lord silly questions. The flu bug gives me good reason to talk to myself, it has three of our staff off from work today.

"Lord, why didn't you have me work like a normal person; do my eight hours and then go home?"

You would think after thirty years of practicing this thing called veterinary medicine I would be acclimated to about anything. I'm not, and the strain of altering work patterns when employees can't work is always tough. Last night I received a call from the kennel boy letting me know the flu bug had caught up with him and he wouldn't be able to work today. It was nice of him to call, but it made me come to work an hour earlier today to do his early morning work. Janie, the part-time cleaning lady, is working as the receptionist because Mary couldn't throw off her flu bug, and we don't have a technician today. Frank, the regular groomer, is helping where he can but he is mainly the 'go-fer' today. We were getting the job done and things were under control until Frank interrupted my choice, prime words that I was delivering to one unhappy 'Tom' cat. I was trying to convince "Tom" that the pill would make him feel better, if he would only swallow the d... thing.

"Doc, Janie has an emergency in the waiting room. A female gas company meter reader has a dog she picked up out of

the middle of the street. What do you want Janie to do?"

"Frank, da...it, you know better than to come up on me when I'm working with a cat! Help the lady get the dog into an exam room! I'll be there after I get this pill down this .... cat."

The cat, the extra work, and the inexperienced help was catching up to me. I must have raised my voice when I told Frank what to do because he was just standing there waiting for something else to happen.

"Sorry, Frank, I didn't mean to holler at you. Get the meter reader and the injured dog into the exam room, I'll be there in a minute."

I must have scared the cat along with Frank when I hollered. The cat had swallowed his pill and pulled up into a round ball position as if to tell me he had enough of whatever I was doing to him and it was now time for a little nap.

I walked into the exam room expecting to find a dog messed up, as only a car can mess one up, but there was Frank on the floor playing with a short, overweight Scottie.

"Frank, where is the emergency and where is the meter reader?"

"Doc, this is it. The meter reader had to go back to work. She told me this Scottie was running down the street dragging this twenty foot chain and that she had to pick it up before a car hit it."

"Who does the dog belong to?"

"Doc, she said you would know."

"Did she say why I should know?"

"Your friend, Ed, told her to bring the dog here because you know who owns every dog in the county. She found the dog a couple of blocks from here."

"Frank, put her on the exam table and I'll take a quick look at her. Do you recognize her? She doesn't seem to know me and she isn't ringing any bells in my memory bank. Have you groomed her?"

"I don't think so."

The long chain rattled against the table as Frank put the overweight Scottie up on the table. For a Scottie she was very outgoing and friendly. I unhooked the chain from her heavy red collar and she gave me a 'thank you' look for taking the anchor off her neck. The clasp on the other end of the chain was broken.

"Frank, the clasp must have broken and released her to run free."

"Doc, she has had good care. I wonder if she was going home when the meter reader lady picked her up?"

"We'll never know."

I got a quick look at a bouncing, wiggling, happy dog whose puppy-like actions were hiding her true age. She had early cataracts developing, along with heavy aging tartar covering her teeth that made me guess her age at about eight or older. She was happily wiggling for affection but became rigid when I tried to palpate her belly. There were subcutaneous, non-absorbable sutures in the area where the incision is usually made for a spay operation.

"Frank, I didn't do the surgery on her. She is sutured with stainless steel and I don't use steel in the belly wall."

Her legs were covered with dried mud which didn't give us a clue about where she had been. "Frank, put her in a run for now. She is too good a pet for her owners not to be out looking for her. Someone is bound to be calling before the day is over."

The morning pushed into the afternoon before I had finished the morning work and took a break. I parked myself in a chair and was sipping on a cup of coffee when I remembered the Scottie. I had forgotten to make the usual call to the dog warden to let him know I had the dog just in case someone called him.

"Hello, Paula, how are things at the dog pound? Oh, this is Dr. Baker and I am calling to let you all know about a stray Scottie I have here in the hospital." I gave Paula the vital statistics and told her I would be keeping the dog for a few days before

sending it to the dog pound. I was sure someone would come hunting for their dog before I had to legally ship her to the pound. The day passed and no inquiries had been made.

The next day started about the same as Wednesday had started, we were short three employees. Everyone did a little extra and we got through to lunch time. No one had inquired about Scottie.

I finally got around to calling the newspaper in Huntington, West Virginia and asked to have the Scottie listed in the Lost and Found. The gal taking the information for the advertisement thought I was giving her too much detail about the dog. She said, "Anyone can come in and claim the dog if I put all those details in the ad." I told her I would know the owner by the way the dog acted, not by what someone told me about 'their dog'.

Frank came to work early on Friday and had given the Scottie a bath. She looked very nice now that she was clean.

"Frank, she looks good. Her owner should know her if they ever show up."

"Doc, she is a lover. I would take her home in a minute if I didn't own five dogs already."

"She has more personality than most people. I can't give her to a new owner because of the state laws. I have an ad in the morning paper, maybe someone will come for her."

Friday morning was like the other days of this week, but Janie had to be at the dentist's office at one so I took over the afternoon receptionist's duties. I don't like working at the front desk, but it wasn't too bad in the early afternoon lunch time lull. I was into a mental lull when the ringing phone jarred me out of my relaxed, not napping, position. "Hello, this is Dr. Baker."

That is not the normal way our business phone is answered. We normally identify the hospital and the person answering the phone.

"Hello, I'm in town from Columbus, Ohio for the Marshall

University football game and one of my mom's friends told her about the ad in the Lost and Found. Mom thinks you might have her dog."

"I can barely hear you. Where are you calling from?"

I was suspicious of this caller. Maybe there was something wrong with the phone, but I didn't know.

"I am in the west end of Huntington, but Mom's phone makes me sound like I am off in the jungles."

"Sir, I doubt this dog is yours. She was found in Chesapeake, Ohio. How long has your Mom's dog been gone?"

"Sir, really, it is Dad's dog and she has been gone for two months. Someone either let her out of the backyard or she was stolen."

I couldn't help but be suspicious of this guy. The Scottie was well cared for, had on a weather worn red collar, and was dragging a broken chain when she was found. She wasn't acting like a dog who had been lost for two months.

"Sir, feel free to come over and take a look. She might be your dog, but I doubt it."

"I missed your name when you answered the phone and your address is not in the ad."

"I am Doctor Baker, the veterinarian in Chesapeake, Ohio."

"Doctor, you said she wasn't injured. Why do you have her at your office?"

I went through all the stuff about being a county commissioner, and the dog pound being twenty miles down the river, and the inconvenience people have holding a stray dog waiting for the dog warden to pick it up. I have many animal loving friends who know about me holding dogs for a little while before the laws make it mandatory for the dog warden to take custody. The caller finally asked for directions to my office and told me he would bring his mother along. He said it would be at least an hour before they could get here.

I got busy being the receptionist and was talking to a gentleman when an older lady and a thirtyish looking man came into my waiting room. The 'what am I doing here look' was on their faces. I interrupted my conversation with the gentleman and asked if they were looking for a stray dog. The young man nodded his head yes. I asked them to take a seat at the far end of the waiting room and told them I would get the Scottie in a few minutes.

I finished with the gentleman, took the phone off the hook and went to get the dog. When I entered the waiting room I took the dog to the glass front door where she could see her way out to freedom. The Scottie started bouncing trying to get out and the lady then screamed, "That's my Maggie!"

Maggie stopped bouncing and ran across the waiting room to the feet of the lady and rolled over onto her back telling the lady to rub her belly. There was no doubt in my mind about who owned the short, fat Scottie. Maggie was very friendly with everyone in the hospital, but she had never rolled over to have her belly rubbed.

"She sure looks like she knows you."

The young man came over to me while his mother rubbed Maggie's belly and went into the details about the ownership. "Doctor, I told you the dog belongs to Dad, but I didn't tell you about him being restricted to a wheelchair. Dad had a stroke about two years ago and hasn't been able to get out of the house since. Maggie was his constant buddy, his companion, and only left his side to go into the yard to play a little and do her business. When Maggie disappeared Dad went into a depressed condition. We didn't tell him we were coming over here to look at a dog that might be Maggie. We told him we were going Christmas shopping. Getting Maggie back will be an early Christmas present for him."

The lady walked up to us, cuddling Maggie very tightly to her chest. Maggie and the lady wanted to go home.

The young man asked, "Doctor, how much do we owe you for your services? I want to get Maggie home and make this a very happy day for Dad, and all of us."

"Young man, you owe me nothing but I'll need to get your Mom's name, address, and phone number. I might have more people inquiring about the ad. All of us can see Maggie has been taken care of for the last couple of months and those people who cared for Maggie might want her back. I think it is only fair, and with your permission of course, to allow those caring people a chance to see Maggie's real home."

I didn't get any more inquiries about the ad but I've had some of Maggie's friends ask how she and her owner reacted when they saw each other. I must give the 'I don't know' answer because they haven't called or even sent a thank you note.

"Did they ever say thank you?" is often asked when I tell the story. I must say, "No, they didn't, but remember it was a shocking surprise for them to find their dog."

It is not like the people of southern Ohio and West Virginia to forget to say thank you. I blame the pressures of getting the final Christmas presents, the Marshall University's National Football Championship game, and the excitement of having their short Scottie home for their forgetfulness.



## THE DRUNKEN WOMAN AND THE DEAD CAT

June is putting a drunk into the exam room. The drunk has a shoebox with a dead cat in it. I hate working for drunks. Drunk women seem to be worse than drunk men, especially when they ask a veterinarian to make a dead cat well. It is even worse when we have a drunk woman with a dead cat who recently came into a great deal of money.

Dr. Perry had phoned about twenty minutes ago and told me about this woman. Dr. Perry got quite upset when he told her the cat was dead and the woman questioned his medical knowledge and abilities. He could have been a little more gentle, or used other words than, "All I can do for your cat is bury it."

Dr. Perry went on with his story about the descriptive words the woman used to describe him. He found a way out of the mouthy abuse he was receiving without using physical force when she said, "I want a second opinion!"

"Ma'am, there is a cat specialist over in Chesapeake. He just moved into the area from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania."

Dr. Perry apologized for referring her to me, but hoped she was too drunk to find her way across the Ohio River.

She wasn't. She came in her new Cadillac. Dr. Perry said she would tell us about her new Cadillac if she holds true to her form of letting everyone know what her money can buy.

Now it is my turn to examine a dead cat. I must go into the small exam room with her. It was funny when Dr. Perry was telling me about this drunk, but it doesn't seem very funny now. What will I do? How will I respond to her unearthly demands? What am I waiting for? Get into that exam room and be a veterinarian -- you're not God!

I walked into the exam room and the alcohol odors were nasal burning. I thought to myself, "Keep going, Doctor. You have been around drunks before. Don't let the odors run you out of your own office."

"Mrs. Stewart, I am Doctor Baker. Doctor Perry phoned and told me you might be coming here for a second opinion."

"What did he have to say about me and my cat?"

"He talked about your cat and said he told you he couldn't treat a dead cat."

"Dr. Baker, he's not much of a doctor. He can't tell dead from alive."

"Oh, Mrs. Stewart, let's not talk about people. Let's get a look at your cat." I took the lid off the shoebox and there was a dead looking cat.

"Mrs. Stewart, your cat looks dead, but let me take it out of the box and check her over."

"Dr. Baker, the cat was okay until Dr. Perry looked at her."

"Mrs. Stewart, your cat is stiff dead. Rigor mortis has set in, it's tail won't even bend. Your cat has been dead for a few hours."

"Doctor Baker, you must be wrong!"

"I am not going to argue with you, but watch as I pick your dead cat up by the tip of the tail. See how stiff the body is? You can turn the cat in any direction when holding only the tip of her tail. You came for my opinion and it is: Your cat is dead and has been dead for hours."

"I am sorry I questioned you, Doctor, but did you have to pick my dead cat up by the tail?"

"Mrs. Stewart, I don't generally make it a habit of picking up dead animals by their tails, but you needed the extra dramatics to see your cat was dead. I am sorry I had to do it that way but I think you know your cat is dead now."

"Doctor, my husband and I are in town about his aunt's estate. I am the new owner of her cats and something needs to be done for them. I want a veterinarian to check these cats, especially the one who is real sick."

"Mrs. Stewart, I'll be in the office until six tonight, if you want me to see the sick one."

"Doc, I have a new Cadillac and I don't plan on hauling any stinking sick cat in my new car. Do you make house calls?"

"Yes, I do, but it will be after seven before I can get out of the office."

"That will be fine. I'll give your receptionist directions to the house. I'll leave the porchlight on and enough space for you to park behind my Cadillac. Can you take care of this cat's body for me?"

"Yes, we can, Mrs. Stewart. I am sorry your cat died, but maybe we can do something for the sick one. I hope to see you tonight."

The front door hardly had time to close before June was back in the exam room giving me motherly advice, and spraying deodorizer.

"Doc, stick your head out the side door for some fresh air. The fumes from her perfume and booze don't mix. Why in the world did you agree to make a house call to that drunk's place? You are asking for trouble."

"June, I am a veterinarian. You know perfectly well I am just starting out in my own business and need more work to do. Every little bit helps put bread on the table, keeps the front door open and pays your salary."

"Doc, you have a point there. Would you like me to go with you tonight? My husband is out of town and I would like to

see how the newly rich live, or at least see what they drink."

"June, I'm glad you volunteered because I would hate going to her house all by my lonesome. This could be a very interesting evening and we might meet her husband."

The afternoon became very busy and time flew. It was pushing seven when June and I loaded ourselves into the old Oldsmobile, the car I use for my large animal calls. We started to follow the directions given by the drunken woman. We didn't think we would find the woman's house, but if we didn't we would give ourselves an 'A' for effort and go get an ice cream cone. We didn't want a completely wasted trip and the ice cream cone sounded pretty good after a day like we had today. We were bouncing along on a very old brick street and up ahead loomed a new Cadillac. I pulled into the space behind the Caddie and there was the brick house with the porchlights on.

June piped off with, "She must not have been as drunk as we thought. The ice cream cone will have to wait."

"June, look at the windows. They have newspapers taped over them."

"Doc, they are probably having their drapes cleaned."

I got my black medicine bag and June got the blanket we use to restrain cats and up the walk we went.

"June, are you sure you want to do this? Or, should we go get that ice cream cone and go back to the office?"

"Come on, Doc. Remember, you are a veterinarian and you're here to treat sick animals, not sick people."

The sign on the doorbell button said, 'Please knock, the buzzer is broken.'

"June, I have a very funny feeling about this place. Let's go get that ice cream cone and head back to the office."

"Ah, come on you big chicken, knock." I knocked and waited. I tried knocking a little harder the second time and waited again. Nothing happened.

I started knocking again, knowing this was the last time I was going to knock on this door. I waited. It was time for me to leave but a light knock and a faint mumbling came from the inside. My patience was growing thin as I waited for the door to open. Feeling like a complete fool, I knocked on the door again. The door started to open but it stopped when only opened about three inches. Did someone want a secret password before they would open the door? I yelled, "This is Doctor Baker, are you going to open this blasted door and let us in or do you want us to leave?"

"Doctor, don't leave, I can't get the door open. Will you push while I pull? Just maybe we can get it opened enough for you to squeeze in." The tough know-it-all voice Mrs. Stewart used this afternoon had turned into weak begging.

"Okay, Mrs. Stewart, I am pushing, you can start pulling anytime now."

She pulled and I pushed. The door opened enough for me to pull my belly in and lift my rib cage up and over the doorknob to slip into the house. She turned loose of the doorknob and the door slammed shut behind me. I jumped and tripped over a guy sprawled on the floor against the door.

"That's my husband."

I could see he wasn't dead but his body was a curled up mass blocking the door.

"What's wrong with him?"

"He's drunk and passed out."

I felt like kicking the fat mass of a man a few times, but I couldn't kick a drunk when he was down and out.

With a very soft voice Mrs. Stewart asked, "Doctor, can you pull my husband away from the door so your nurse can get in?"

I hadn't forgotten June. I was watching a bunch of cats running around. When the door slammed shut the noise stirred up the cats. Where did all of these cats come from? Why would any-

one want this many cats running around, stinking up their house?

"If I can't drag him away from the door, I'll roll him if that is okay with you."

"Please, Doctor, move him. I don't care how you do it." She sounded like she was going to kick him a few times.

"Okay, get out of my way!" I took Mr. Stewart by the arm and dragged him a few feet to the bottom of the stairs which led to the second floor. There were a few cats sitting about half way up the stairs watching every move I made.

Mrs. Stewart ordered, "Just drop him there, he'll wake up in a few minutes." So, I dropped him.

I opened the door and June came in with my black bag and her blanket. June's face puckered up when the cat odor hit her. She pulled the blanket up over her nose, trying to filter out the cat stench. It didn't work. She stepped back out on the porch for fresh air. I followed her out in case she needed some help.

"June, are you going to be okay?"

"I'll be okay, Doc. I didn't expect that sudden ammonia cat odor. I'm okay." I had been so distracted getting into the house and dragging Mr. Stewart out of the way that I hadn't paid much attention to how strong the odor was.

June and I prepared for our re-entry. We stepped back into the house and this time we took time to look around the place. There were cats everywhere -- on the steps, in the hall, on the mantle over the fireplace, and some just running around the house. I was wondering how anyone had space to live. The aunt may have left a bunch of money to the nephew, but she hadn't spent much on furniture, if what I was seeing was all the old lady had.

June had to be wrong about the drapes being off to the cleaners because there was no evidence drapes ever hung over the windows. I was starting to feel sorry for the aunt I had never met. The furniture in the living room consisted of a bare mattress on the floor with the blankets and pillows in a pile on one end. There was

a heavy cardboard box which once held a new TV serving as an end table next to a lawn chair. The TV was over in a corner. There were dirty dishes, cups, and glasses sitting on the cardboard end table, but the empty, dirty cat dishes outnumbered everything. I assumed they were cat dishes because a cat would stop at an empty margarine dish as if looking for food. I was ready to take June by the arm and leave. To this day, I don't know why I stayed.

"Mrs. Stewart, where is the sick cat I came to see?"

Mrs. Stewart had gone into the living room and had stretched out on a lawn couch, as if she was exhausted.

"Doctor Baker, go down the hall through the kitchen to the bathroom which is off to the left. The cat is in the shower stall on some dirty clothes."

June and I started down the hall toward the kitchen, dodging friendly cats with every step. The kitchen had more dirty margarine dishes on the floor, in the sink, and on the cabinets. Oh, what a mess!

The bathroom had all kinds of dirty stuff lying around and the shower stall was stacked half full of dirty clothes, but no sign of a sick cat.

"Mrs. Stewart, there is no cat to be seen in this shower stall, only dirty clothes. Where else could it be?"

"I'll bet my husband threw dirty clothes in on top of her. Dig around, you'll find her. I would come back there and help you, but the cat is so sick I can't stand to look at her."

I couldn't help but wonder how a sick cat would bother anyone who lived in this squalor. I wasn't about to put my hands in that stack of filth. I looked around for something to use as a probe. I was pretty lucky, there in the corner was a commode brush that hadn't been unwrapped. I used it to drag dirty clothes out of the shower stall. I had worked my way about halfway through the pile of dirty clothes and there was a cat all curled up. It looked dead. I wiggled its' tail and it jerked a little.

"June, give me our clean blanket, this cat is alive. Don't

ask me how it lived under that mess of dirty clothes, but it is alive."

I laid the limp cat on our blanket and did a quick checkup. The cat was jaundiced, dehydrated, and her eyes were sunken with a death look. The cat was uncaring to my probing and twisting of its little body. "June, if we are going to help this cat, it will need hospital treatment. Wrap her up in the blanket and let's get out of this filth."

I called to Mrs. Stewart as June and I were heading down the hall to the front door. "Mrs. Stewart, we are taking this cat back to the hospital for treatment."

June and I came to a halt when we reached the living room and saw Mr. Stewart sitting on the edge of the mattress. Oh, my...the drunk had come out of his coma and was sitting there twirling an old .38 pistol on one finger like he was in an old western movie. Oh, Lord, give me strength and some quick wisdom to get us out of here.

My lips were moving and I heard words coming out of my mouth. "Mr. Stewart, that looks like the .38 my grandmother kept under her mattress."

"Doc, it is a .38 and it was kept under the mattress by my deceased aunt."

"Well, I'll be. Do you care if I look at it?"

"Here, son, take a look but be careful, it's loaded."

Thoughts flashed through my mind about this guy sitting on the mattress on the floor. He was in a drunken coma a few minutes ago and now he was being so articulate with each word he spoke. Then again, why was he twirling an old pistol around on his finger like a cowboy in a cheap black and white movie? I guess a drunk is a drunk. I took the pistol and started looking at it while telling the Stewarts that the cat would need some intensive treatment if we were going to have any chance of saving its life. I would take her to the hospital now and get started with the medication.

"June, let me get the door for you and I'll join you in the car in just a minute." June headed out the door. I asked the Stewarts

to call us in the morning as I put the .38 on the hall steps, picked up my black bag and headed for the door.

Mr. Stewart called at me, "Doctor Baker, if you save the cat's life I'll give you the new Cadillac setting out there by the curb. Do you understand? That Cadillac is yours, if you save the cat's life?"

"Thank you, but I must get back to the hospital before I can get any treatment started. Don't forget to call in the morning."

Oh, Lord, I thought. Just get me to the old Oldsmobile and get us out of here before something else happens.

I gave a big sigh of relief as the old Oldsmobile started and we were moving down the street. June and I sat there without saying a word. Finally, I asked, "June, how would you like an ice cream cone?"

"Doc, I need something to drink and I don't mean coffee."

Our lips were sealed with our personal thoughts for the remainder of the trip back to the hospital. I opened the door as June carried the cat into the treatment room and gently placed the blanket covered cat on the treatment table.

"There's your cat, Doc. You can treat her and I'll make a fresh pot of coffee."

Everyone at the hospital had been surprised by the Stewarts throughout the cat's hospital stay. The Stewarts really cared for their cat. We were called at least twice daily for a medical report. The daily requests of how is the cat doing and requests to come and visit with their cat seemed so out of character.

It just wasn't this cat's time to die. We gave it all kinds of intensive treatment and after four days it started eating. I had June call the Stewarts to let them know it was time for their cat to go home.

The Stewarts came for their cat and I gave them the instructions on how I wanted the cat cared for at home. Mr. Stewart paid June and turned to me with, "Doc, I am an attorney and I thought I would tell you now, if you would have had me put

the Cadillac gift offer in writing for saving the cat's life, you would be the owner of a new Cadillac."

The Stewarts walked out of our front door with their cat, never to be heard from again. I wonder why? I also wonder why I didn't do something to find out the answer to the why? Maybe he shot all the cats with his aunt's .38? Maybe he got drunk and stayed drunk? Maybe he moved out of town?

I'll never know.





## DON'T CHASE DUCKS ON THIN ICE

There was a paramedic on each end of their human backboard. They wiggled around the doors and the corners trying to manipulate the backboard onto the examination table in my eight foot by eight foot exam room. The eighty pound German Shepherd was strapped down, but she was still trying to get off the backboard. Her struggling didn't make it any easier for the paramedics. The firemen and the policeman who were wedging their way into the small exam room didn't leave any space for me.

"Okay, folks! Some of you must clear out of here so I can have a little room to work!"

The paramedics unstrapped the dog from the backboard and held her as she tried to pull herself from the table. The name tag on her collar said her name was Daisy and her owner's name is George Mitchell of Chesapeake. I thought she looked familiar, but she looked a little different strapped to the backboard.

"Folks, I've taken care of Daisy since she was six weeks old, but she hasn't come in on a backboard before."

When I got a closer look she appeared bright and alert. She had her 'I am glad to see you' expression on her face. Her rear legs and feet were extremely red and appeared to be swelling a little. When she tried to move her rear legs they wouldn't work in rhythm with her front legs.

"Will someone tell me what is going on with Daisy? Do I get to guess what brought all of you to my office today?"

One of the paramedics told me they had just gotten Daisy out of the ice on Symmes Creek. Daisy's rear legs were cold to

the touch, but her front legs were warm.

"It looks like she has a hypothermia in her rear end, if I can use that term for only a part of the body. Regardless of the proper medical term, I must treat her." I got an IV slowly dripping the medicines for shock into a vein in a front leg. I directed the technician to start filling the deep therapy tank in the treatment room with cool water so we could start the slow warming up process to Daisy's rear legs. The feet could be frostbitten, or even frozen, so the warming up had to go slow and easy to avoid causing more tissue damage.

The treatment room is larger than the exam rooms so everyone had followed along to the treatment room to see how veterinarians treat animals exposed to very cold conditions. It didn't take very long for the rescuers to get bored watching us slowly warm the water. They exited out the side door with a request to let them know how things turned out with Daisy. One of the firemen told us the story about Daisy's trip on thin ice before he departed.

The rescuers were hardly out the door when my twenty-year old daughter came charging into the treatment room wanting to know if I was okay and what was going on.

"Sis, didn't you talk to your paramedic buddies on your way in here? They just went out the side door."

"Dad, a fire truck, a police car, and an ambulance are parked out front, but there were no people around."

"Sorry, Sis, you just missed them when you came in the front door and they went out the side. I am okay! It is a long story, but that German Shepherd in the treatment tank is what brought all the vehicles and people to the hospital."

"Dad, I was on my way home from work and saw all those vehicles in the parking lot and they scared me."

"I can understand that. Now, go phone your mother and tell her I am okay before someone calls her to find out why the ambulance was here. I'll tell you the story after you call your

mom."

My family had been extra watchful of my every movement since I had a fall and ended up in the hospital. Several years ago, I slipped on a wet floor here at the office and hit my head on a steel door casing. I knocked myself out and woke up seven days later tied down to a hospital bed. I was told later that I kept pulling the I.V.'s out, so they had to tie my arms down. That's another story, but it is the reason my family overreacts at times.

I had to tell Sis what had happened to Daisy before her intense curiosity got out of hand and she started to assume I was hiding something from her.

"Sis, one of the firemen told me what happened to Daisy. She fell through the ice on Symmes Creek. There is more to this story than getting a dog out of a frozen creek, so as we wait for her to warm up, I'll tell you."

"Daisy's owner, George Mitchell, lives in one of the extra nice houses on the hill overlooking the boat launching ramp where Symmes Creek enters the Ohio River. The boat ramp area is where Daisy went through the ice. This wasn't Daisy's first bad experience at the boat ramp. When she was about six months old she ventured away from home to see the goings on at the boat ramp. On that trip she saw the ducks in the creek and got so excited chasing them, she ran into a boat trailer and broke a front leg. I don't know if Daisy thinks the ducks caused her to break her leg, but since then she has chased those ducks every chance she gets. Over the years, I've received many calls from George's neighbors about Daisy chasing what I call the 'Welfare Mallard Ducks'. Maybe I shouldn't call them welfare ducks, but some goodhearted women have made them just that. The women have fed the ducks for so long, the ducks won't even go south for the winter. They stay here to be fed on a regular schedule. The women buy grain, usually corn, in hundred pound bags and feed the ducks winter and summer. I think the birds are smart enough to stay around to get their meals from a bag rather than getting

their meals the way normal birds get their meals. Why work if someone is going to hand out a free meal?"

"Anyway, the design of the boat ramp makes it very easy for the women to drive their cars close to the water's edge and toss the corn from the trunks of their cars."

"W-e-l-l, dogs will be dogs and ducks will be ducks and Daisy likes to sneak off from home to chase the ducks. I don't think she has ever caught a duck, but the women who feed the ducks do not like to have 'their' ducks chased. This morning was a little different. Symmes Creek was half covered with ice when the ladies went to feed the Mallards. The women tossed the corn out onto the ice where the Mallards could get to it more easily than coming up to the shore. Daisy was turned out for her morning exercise and must have heard the Mallards chattering, so she went for her duck chase. George had to go to work before Daisy got back from her morning exercise, but he knew his wife would be getting up soon and would let Daisy back into the house. It didn't work out that way!"

"The volunteer firemen were called out to save a dog that had gone through the thin ice. The caller wasn't too specific with the details of what else might have gone through the ice, so the police and the emergency ambulance also responded to the unidentified caller's report. When they arrived at the boat ramp there were no people around, but Daisy was half submerged in the icy water. She was trapped in a three foot rounded out hole in the thin ice. She had her front feet up on the ice, but couldn't get her hind parts out of the water. The firemen had a net, blanket-like apparatus that when spread out over thin ice, would support their weight when crawling on the ice. A volunteer crawled out on the apparatus and was able to pull Daisy up onto the net. The paramedics took over, but couldn't get much response from Daisy's rear legs. They strapped her to the backboard and led the parade of ambulance, fire truck, and police car to my office."

"Okay, Sis? That's how all those emergency vehicles got

to my parking lot. Go home and tell your mother the details."

I am constantly amazed at how fast news travels through our small community. The receptionist was getting calls from George's neighbors, George's wife, and George before Daisy's rear legs started to warm up. As things turned out, the treatment was uneventful and by evening Daisy was ready to go home. I sent some medicine home along with instructions on what I wanted done as far as home nursing was concerned. I also asked George to keep Daisy away from the boat ramp while the ladies did their duck feeding.

The next morning I received a call from one of the duck feeding women and she chewed me out in no uncertain words. She was almost hostile. "Doctor Baker, why did you let Daisy go home? You should know it takes more than a few hours to overcome frostbite!"

"Ma'am, I sent medicine and home treatment instructions with Daisy. Mr. Mitchell was instructed on what to do and when to do it and a follow-up appointment was made to check Daisy. What is wrong with Daisy this morning?"

"Doctor! Mr. Mitchell turned Daisy loose this morning while I was feeding my Mallards and she came down to the creek to chase them. You should have kept Daisy in the hospital for two or three days so she wouldn't be out chasing my ducks!"

I was about ready to unload my thoughts on the lady, but I didn't. I doubt very much if she would have believed she had created the problem by feeding the ducks. I doubt she would believe me if I told her two or three days in the hospital wouldn't change Daisy's habits of chasing the welfare Mallards.

The feeding of the ducks, and Daisy chasing them, continued for years but she never went through the ice again.



## DON'T TOUCH MY COW

In 1963 John Glenn orbited the earth and I graduated from veterinary school. I mention 1963 only to stir your memory a little about the way things were then. John Glenn orbiting and my graduation have no reason to be mentioned together except I could have orbited without a rocket on graduation day.

Now that you are thinking thirty plus years ago, I'll tell the whys. This story mentions an International four wheel drive truck as if a four wheel drive was really something special. It was special, it was the only four wheel drive truck on the market in those days except for army surplus trucks.

The brakes on vehicles have changed also, from drum brakes and brake shoes to anti-lock disc brakes. What a change in stopping a moving vehicle!

The 'Don't Touch My Cow' episode in my veterinary career happened in the spring of 1965. I mention this for the younger reader who might be seeing words that have different meanings now than they did then, like 'gaslights', or 'riding the brakes', or even 'cut sandstone'.

READ ON....

"Babs, I am going to stretch out in the recliner chair and get rested up a little before I go to bed. I know I've seen every sick animal in the county today. There couldn't be anything else out there needing medical help. I doubt we will have a single call this evening."

"Dream on, Carl. There's a full moon and you know the

moon causes the unexpected to happen. I'll wake you for bed, if the phone doesn't get you first."

I could hear the phone ringing but couldn't get myself out of my semi-comatose condition to do anything about it. Way off in a distance I could hear Babs answering the phone but I couldn't get myself awake enough to realize she was just out in the kitchen. I dozed off.

Babs was shaking me but I couldn't get my body and brain working together. "Carl, wake up. Wake up, you're wanted on the phone."

"Okay! Okay, Babs. I'm awake. What is it this time?"

The day at the office had been a busy one but I didn't feel exhausted when I stretched out in the recliner. I guess I am awake. "Babs, what did you say about the telephone?"

"Carl, it's for you. It sounds like an old man who has been drinking. He has a cow with some kind of emergency he can't talk about to a woman."

"Thank you, dear. That's all I need, a drunk with an emergency."

"Hello, this is Dr. Baker. How may I help you?"

"Doc, I have a cow that is down and you have never seen anything like this."

"What's wrong with your cow? You say she is down and I have never seen anything like this before. What haven't I seen before?"

"Doc, I had my neighbor come over and look at her. In all of his years of raising cattle he has never seen a cow like this one."

"Sir, tell me what you are seeing."

"I got another guy from out on the ridge to come over and look at her. He's not a vet but he works on cows. He has never seen a cow like this one. He says nothing can be done for her."

"Sir, will you please tell me what you are seeing that is so bad I've never seen anything like it before and can't do a thing about it anyway."

"Doc, don't get huffy with me. It was my son who had me call you about her insides coming out."

At times like this I talk to myself. What does this guy think I am? He's driving me nuts! Let me try again.

"Sir, is whatever it is you are seeing coming from the rectum or the vagina?"

"Doc, it's coming out of both holes. That's why I couldn't talk to your wife."

"Sir, what is your name?"

"Bert is my name. What do you think about my cow?"

"I think your cow has a prolapsed rectum and vagina. Is she pregnant?"

"Yeah, Doc, it's calving time."

"Bert, I'll need to see her before I can tell you if I can help her. I will also need some strong backs to help me put her back together if it is what I think it is."

"Doc, how much do you charge for a farm call?"

"Bert, I don't know where you are or how much time will be involved so I'll guess between twenty-five and one hundred and twenty-five dollars."

"Doc, the cow is worth more than twenty-five dollars. Come on down Route 10 off Route 60 east of Huntington. It takes twenty minutes from the turn off and you will see my son, Bud, parked to the right side of the road. He will be in a white, four wheel drive International pickup truck with its' tail lights on. Bud will be your helper."

Babs was half laughing at me when I hung up the phone. "Well, Carl, was he drinking?"

"Babs, why did you answer the phone? The moon is full and it is calving time. Remember what I was telling you about calving time and not having a prolapse this year? Well, I've got one now, owned by an old man who has been drinking. The old man has had all the local quacks look and poke at his cow and they cannot fix her. So now, he calls on a veterinarian. I should have

refused the call but maybe I can save the cow and the calf."

"Carl, wear a heavy jacket and boots tonight. It's supposed to get cold and wet, and maybe snow."

"Babs, please fix me a thermos of coffee. I am going down Route 10 into the unknown. Oh, boy! It's bound to be a long night just getting there and back. It will be a very long night if I can repair the prolapses."

The ritual of leaving the little old house begins. I put my coat on, Carla and Sandra get their goodbye peck, Babs gets a more meaningful kiss, and our poodle, 'Sorry-Dog,' gets a pat on the head. I get into the family car which is temporarily doubling as my large animal vehicle since the old Oldsmobile is in the shop. I'm off! Off to the unknown to see a farmer who has been drinking and is probably well on his way to becoming a know-it-all drunk by now.

The time I spend going to and coming from distant farm calls gives me time to lazily wonder about anything entering my mind. I try to think of the pleasant things which make this old world go around. I crossed the Ohio River on the old Sixth Street Bridge, paid my ten cent toll, and complained to the tolltaker about fixing the potholes. The tolltaker doesn't seem to care but thanks me for my dime.

The drive through Huntington on their nice, wide, and well lit streets is comforting until I start thinking about the drive down the dreaded Route 10 to my unknown destination.

I turn on to Route 10 and the adventure begins. I was only a few minutes out of the lights of Huntington when a heavy layer of clouds moved in to hide the moon and stars. The deep, twisting mountain road can only be seen by my headlights. It was like driving through a tunnel of blackness with turns the headlights couldn't bend around. I was driving into a wall of blackness.

Twenty minutes of stressful driving passes and up ahead red parking lights popped out of the darkness. I pulled in beside the white four-wheel drive International pickup truck and through

my opened window announced, "I'm Doctor Baker, are you Bert's son, Bud?"

"Yes, sir." he replied. "Doc, follow me across the creek's fording place and we will put your stuff into my truck for the trip up the mountain."

"Lead on, Bud, but I can't swim."

"Don't worry, Doc, I can't swim, either. The water is low or I wouldn't be crossing."

We went a few hundred yards after crossing the creek and stopped at the bottom of a mountain. I parked the car and transferred my equipment to his truck. Bud had said only a four wheel drive could make it to the top of the mountain. My box of equipment was secured in the back of the truck and my leather bag of bottled medicines was secured between my legs. We start.

Bud had warned me the trip up the mountain would be bouncy on the washed out road of ruts, gullies, and rocks. The odor of alcohol filled the truck cab but Bud's driving didn't seem to be affected.

"Bud, what do you do for a living?"

"Doc, I am educated as a teacher, but I'm out of work now. I've only had two beers so don't let the odor make you think I'm drunk. I'll get drunk after helping you with Dad's cow."

"Bud, I thought there was a shortage of teachers in this area."

"It's a long story but I'll give you the short version. I needed financial help going through Marshall University so I took the advanced ROTC course along with my teaching classes. I paid my debt by being a soldier for two years. I got out of the Army a few months ago. I'm a substitute teacher now with a full time position promised when the next school year rolls around. Hold on! We're coming up to the 'up and over' crest of the mountain."

The truck felt like it was taking off like an elevator's sudden start which drops your lungs down into your belly, followed by open-mouthed, deep breathing. My black bag was pulling my feet

from the floorboard. Then came a small boom as the truck dropped down from its short flight and landed on the mountain top.

I took another gasp of air, opened my eyes, and there was the moon showing off the flattened out mountain top farm. The large, moist meadow we landed in sparkled with the moonlight reflecting from the dew covered grass.

"Doc, Bert's house is off to the right, at the tree line. Are you okay, Doc? You're breathing fast!"

"Yes, I'm okay. That up and over was like a roller coaster and I don't like those rides."

"Doc, it's to the house first, then to the barn. I want you to meet Bert then you get to meet his cow. Bert might want to go to the barn with us."

The house was traditionally rural with old undated age, neatly nestled in a grove of wind protecting pine trees. I followed Bud inside and thought that time had been turned back to the early 1900's. The furniture was antique, but was being used as everyday furniture. At the old, round oak kitchen table were three older men playing cards and drinking some homemade alcoholic beverage. The natural gaslights hung from the ceilings in each room with the one above the oak kitchen table casting a pale, bluish hue to the white hair of the card players. The house had no electricity, only natural gas for their lights and gas wall heaters in each room.

"Doc, this is my dad, Bert, and two of his friends. Bert, this is Doctor Baker."

Bert didn't raise his head from his handful of cards, but he gave a half hearted nod of recognition. His friends just sat motionless, waiting for us to leave. Bud offered me a drink or a cup of coffee.

"No, thank you for now. Let's take a look at Bert's cow."

"Dad, are you going to the barn with us?"

Bert answered with a negative shake of his head.

"Doc, it looks like Dad is more interested in his cards than he is in his cow. Let's go."

The barn was about three hundred yards further around the edge of the meadow from the house. Bud pulled up to what looked like a single story, wood-sided barn and then slowly started down over the hill and around the wood structured barn to its lower level. The hillside barn was perfect for storing hay in the top and feeding cattle in the lower level. The barn had to be at least one hundred years old. The walls of the lower level were made from handcut sandstone which were cut into blocks two feet high by two feet wide by four feet long. The blocks were handfitted without mortar into walls which held the upper level hay barn. The lower level allowed easy, free access for the cows to come and go through the two wide openings left in the stone wall. Bud aimed the headlights through one of these openings.

"There she is, Doc. It's your turn to go to work."

There in the headlights lay a Hereford cow. She didn't seem to respond to the truck noises or to the lights. She looked dead.

"Bud, get the big flashlight out of the box in the back of the truck and I'll go ahead and check her using this small light for a quick look-see."

The night wind was building up on the mountain top with cold gusts blowing into the open barn and on to the downed cow. The heavy jacket and insulated boots Babs had me put on before leaving Chesapeake were welcomed warmth now. I walked around the Hereford cow and could see the ruts she had kicked into the earthen floor while struggling to get into a comfortable position. She was still alive, but she didn't seem to have the energy to get up or care about the wind blowing or about a stranger standing there. I had to get down on my hands and knees to see how much damage she had done to herself while she fought for relief from the prolapsed rectum and vaginal pain. Bud came in behind me with the beam from the big light focusing in on the pro-

lapsed tissue. He gasped a horrible noise that startled me.

"Oh, my God! Doc, she's coming apart. Do you really think you can put her back together?"

"I think we have a good chance if you'll quit making those strange noises."

"I'm sorry, Doc, but I hadn't seen her before right now."

"Your dad told me on the phone that you would be my helper and I assumed you had checked the cow before I was called."

"No, Doc. One of his card playing, drinking buddies did the checking. I only told Dad I had heard about you and suggested he call. I think I will be able to help you without anymore outbursts."

"What I plan to do first is to get a spinal block into her, then clean up the mess, put her insides back in and sew her up. You get some hot water. I'll get my black bag."

I started for the truck when a voice came out of the darkness, "Don't touch my cow!"

The voice startled me! I stopped in my tracks! I couldn't see through the truck's strong headlights into the darkness to where the voice came.

"Dad?" Bud questioned.

"Yes! Don't touch my cow!"

"Dad, Doctor Baker came out here after you called him and he thinks he can save your cow and the calf."

"Don't argue with me, Son."

Bert deliberately eased from the darkness into the beams of the truck's headlights to show us his .30-.30 rifle that he had cradled across his arm in a ready position.

"Don't touch my cow, Son!"

Bud started, "Doc, he's been drinking and those buddies of his have him brainwashed about what can be done for his cow. I'm afraid he might shoot us if we do anything to his cow."

"I believe him, Bud, and I don't plan on touching his cow.

Ask him if he will let you shoot the cow to get her out of her suffering. I will try to save the calf after you shoot the cow, if that's okay with Bert."

Bert didn't wait for Bud to repeat my question. "Bud, here's the .30-.30, shoot the cow and try to save the calf."

I was glad to see the gun change hands. Bud started for the head of the cow and I headed for the other side of the sandstone wall. The .30-.30 cracked inside the barn like a blast from a cannon. I went to work to save the calf. I used my large post mortem knife to get into the cow's uterus to get the calf out as quickly as possible.

The calf was out. I cleaned off her face and she bawled a weak 'baa' and started to breathe.

Bud cheered, "We saved her, Doc! We saved her, Dad!" But, Bert was gone into the darkness.

"Bud, we need to cut the cord, dry her off, get her warm, and feed her."

"I'll take her to my bedroom."

"That's okay with me, it's your bedroom. Let's put her in the truck and head for the warm house."

We took the calf into his bedroom and placed her on a throw rug in front of the gas wall heater.

"Bud, I need something to wipe off this slime. We must get her dry so she can get warm and stay warm."

Bud went to his dresser and started tossing laundered, white shirts at me. "Wipe her down with these, I don't need them now."

"I don't need white shirts to wipe her, anything will do. We'll ruin your shirts."

"Wipe her with the shirts, I'll get new ones next fall if I get my teaching job or I won't need white shirts anyway."

I dried the calf. She was getting warm and trying to stand up on her stilted legs when Bert stuck his head into the doorway.

"I'll take the calf. I have stuff in the kitchen to feed her if

it's okay to bottle feed some goat's milk?"

"Bert, it sounds like you've fed some calves before. You get her fed and Bud can take me off this beautiful mountain top farm of yours."

"How much do we owe you?", Bud asked.

"It will be twenty-five dollars."

"I'll have to stop at Lucy's to get my check cashed."

We were heading back down the mountain much faster than we had come up.

"Bud, just what and where is Lucy's?"

"See that light up ahead on the side of the hill? That's Lucy's."

"I didn't see the porchlight on the way up the mountain. What's Lucy's?"

"Lucy's is a small mountain bar, grill, and bedroom business. The light is on when she is open for business and off when she is doing business. It's on so I can cash my unemployment check."

Bud was back in a few minutes with a beer in one hand and twenty-five dollars in the other. He gave me the twenty-five.

I was relieved when we got to the car and had my stuff packed for the trip home. I started the car and then waited for the frost to melt off the windshield. I had asked Bud to wait so I could follow him back across the creek to Route 10. He didn't wait. I guess he had meant it when he said he would get drunk after helping me with Bert's cow.

I drove to what I thought was the spot where Bud had forded. It didn't look too deep so I continued very slowly into the creek.

The car started sinking. The trunk end of the car was still on the creek bank but the front end was slowly sinking. I just sat there not knowing what to do but to call myself stupid, unacceptable words in mixed company.

The water was slowly coming up around my feet and got

to my butt when the car quit sinking. I just sat there like a dummy not knowing what to do. A porchlight came on about fifty yards away. I wondered where the house had come from.

I pushed the car door open and waded into the very cold creek. A lady with a shawl wrapped around her shoulders came out on to her porch. She called and motioned for me to come over to her house and then went back inside. When I got to her porch she opened the door and invited me in.

"I knew Bud would just run off and leave you. I was sure you would miss the fording spot. I'll get you a fresh cup of coffee and call the wrecker."

She came back with the coffee and the good news that the wrecker would be here in fifteen minutes. She sat on the couch and I stood in front of the gas wall heater, drying out and talking about the cow and hardheaded Bert.

"Ma'am hasn't twenty minutes passed? What do you think about the wrecker man?"

"Oh, I bet that wrecker man did it again! He takes a wrecker call and tells people he is on his way and then leaves the phone off the hook and goes back to sleep."

She tried calling the wrecker man again but got a busy signal.

"I'll call my friend and see if he and his son will help you. They can hook on to your car with their two tractors and pull you out."

I just waited. She was back with good news, again.

"They'll be here in a few minutes."

The two big John Deere tractors came across the creek and the father and son were hooking chains to my car by the time I got to them. The way they worked was a typical farmer type approach to a job. There was a job to do so let's get it done. The car was pulled up on dry ground, the doors were opened, and the water was draining out. The son was checking the engine.

"Looks okay. No sign of water in your oil. Do you want

me to try to start it?", the son called.

"Yes, please, and if it will start take it across the creek.", I said in my 'I need all the help I can get' tone.

I thanked the very kind lady, tried to pay her but she refused to accept any money and she went back into her house.

I rode on the back of the father's tractor across the creek to the spot where I had met Bud a few hours ago and where the son had parked my car.

"Doc, those brakes are wet and grabbing. You had better go slow and dry them out."

"Thank you ever so much, and now, how much do I owe this father and son team of mercy workers?"

The father sheepishly asked, "Does twenty-five dollars sound fair to you?"

"Yes, sir." I handed him the twenty-five dollars Bud had given me.

"Thank you. We're heading back to bed. Now drive very slowly and ride those brakes."

I found the thermos, poured a cup of coffee and started up the road for home. I drove very slowly, riding the brakes and sipping coffee. The brakes would grab every now and then spilling coffee on me and the wet seat. Oh, well, I'll clean it tomorrow.

I had the brakes dry by the time I got back to the lights of Huntington but my butt was wet from the soaked seat. I gave the bridge tolltaker my dime without comment.

Babs had left the porchlight on for me but the rest of the house was dark. I was as quiet as I could be entering the kitchen and turning on the light. I was greeted by 'Sorry-Dog'. There he was with a smile on his face and a wag in his tail. It didn't matter to him that it was 2 AM. I patted him on the head and he headed back to bed. I didn't need a pat on the head. I just flopped into the recliner and slept until a new day began.

With the sun coming up, I told Babs how I drowned her car.





## THE DOG WARDEN'S DOG

"Bob, what in the world is taking you so long getting the dog out of your truck and into the hospital? Did someone get you out of bed for a dog catcher's call? You're going to have to change your habit of going to bed at nine o'clock. Do you need help?"

"No, I don't need help. Yes, someone got me out of bed. It was the Ohio State Patrol. No, I'm not changing my habit of going to bed early. The dog has been injured, and I am being as careful as I can be to avoid causing him more pain. Does that answer all of your questions, Doctor!?"

It was quite obvious our dog warden was upset with what had happened to him this night, but this veterinarian wasn't too happy about being called out by the dog warden at ten o'clock. Bob had gently put the rack of bones of a dog on the exam table. I was taking a quick look at the debilitated, knocking-on-death's-door hound dog.

"Bob, I am a veterinarian, not a magician. Do you really think I can put this dog back into a halfway normal functioning hound? A blind man can see both rear legs are fractured, along with pelvic fractures, and maybe a broken back. I know you have euthanized dogs with similar conditions without calling me. Why did you call me tonight?"

"Doc, look at the smile on his face. He knows we are going to help him. He is hurting and he didn't even try to bite me when I chipped his rear end loose from the pool of ice and picked

him up."

"Whoa Bob, what do you mean chipped him out of the ice?"

"Evidently, the impact from being hit by the car knocked him out and tossed him into a water filled hole by the side of the road. He laid unconscious for quite a while because the temperature dropped and froze him in the pool. The State Patrol found him struggling to free himself and they called me. I had to break the ice to get him out of the hole. Do you think you can save him?"

"I don't know what I can do yet. I'll give it a good try, if you will help me."

"What do you want me to do?"

"I'll tell you as we go along. First things first. Let's get him warmed up. He is too big to soak in the bath tub, so let's put him in the deeper soak tank where we can keep his body covered with warm running water."

Bob turned out to be a very gentle assistant. I started intravenous fluids and medicines and he got the dog into the tank.

It took about an hour to slowly warm the frozen dog's body. As his body warmed he started feeling the pain which had been masked by the freezing. He didn't like getting a bath and struggled to get out of the soak tub--which caused pain in the fractured legs and created his very pitiful facial expressions.

"Bob, be a little more careful moving him around. He now has pain and doesn't know why."

"I'll be careful, but I don't think he will bite me."

"Bob, we need a name for this hound. I don't want to go through his probable extended hospital stay calling him 'The Dog Warden's Dog.' Give him a name."

"Let's call him 'Patrol' for the guys who started this life saving ordeal."

"Okay, it's 'Patrol', the Dog Warden's Dog. You're right, when you call it an ordeal. The life saving stuff we will be using

on him won't be easy for him."

We got him out of the tub, after a good washing and soaking. We then towed him off and dried him with the blow dryer, and x-rayed him. Patrol's back wasn't broken, but both rear legs and the pelvis were fractured.

"The fractures look repairable with surgery. I can probably put things back together with steel pins and wire. The skin areas which were frozen will take some time to heal. It will be at least a week before we know if we will need to do extensive plastic surgery, and six to eight weeks of difficult home treatment and nursing. Now, if you know someone who will take care of him after I do all the veterinary work, I'll try to put him back together. You must remember the need for home treatment will be as important as the surgery. If you can't get someone to do the nursing care, I won't let him suffer through a slow, very painful death. I'll put him out of his misery now."

"Doc, I'll take care of him better than a nurse."

"Okay, you will be his nurse. We have done all we can do tonight. He is resting comfortably, it's after midnight, and I'm going home for some rest before tomorrow's work begins."

I was a little surprised Babs was still up when I got home. I think she had fallen asleep in the recliner chair and hadn't made it to bed. She said she had been reading and was going to go to bed now, since I had made it home. I kept her up a little longer to tell her about Patrol. She has to put up with a lot, being married to a veterinarian, especially when this veterinarian starts telling her about an unusual case.

"Babs, I must tell you about the hound dog the Dog Warden brought in tonight. We have been working on what I thought was going to be a dead dog. I think I can put him back together enough so he will be able to live a relatively normal life. He will probably look funny to some people, but he won't be admiring his surgery in front of a mirror. He will be funny looking, if we save him, but the new owner and the dog won't worry about

how he looks."

"Something has gotten you excited, at least a little more than you were when you left here at ten o'clock."

"Babs, it's that dog. He is just an old hound dog with a personality that makes you want to do things for him. I know there will be hours and hours of work and many dollars spent on medicines that I won't get paid for, but I'm going to try to save him."

"Carl, it won't be the first or the last time you've done free work, so don't worry about it. I'm going to bed. I have the kids to get off to school in the morning. Good night love."

"Good night dear. I'll be to bed after I unwind."

The next morning's examination of Patrol revealed some areas of damaged skin. Skin grafts were going to be needed to replace the dead and dying areas. The grafting will wait until after bone surgery. The medical and surgical plans were established. We take everything one step at a time and we must now wait for Patrol's lifegiving body organs to function.

Patrol had a good bowel movement and passed urine during the morning hours. The intravenous fluids were running and Patrol even ate and drank a little. I had no excuse to postpone the bone surgery, so it was scheduled for the next day. It took about three hours of surgery to get the stainless steel pins implanted into the fractured leg bones. The fractured parts of the pelvis were wired into alignment. I walked out of surgery feeling quite good about the repair job. Thinking ahead, I knew a homemade custom-fitted cart of some kind would be needed if Patrol was going to be able to move around. He would only have his front legs for support and movement. He needed to move or die.

"Frank, we need to build one of those walking buggies for Patrol. Do you think you can do it?"

"Sure, Doc, if you give me a day or two. I'll have you a custom-fitted walker made out of aluminum rod and wood. Do you remember the one I made a few years ago that had old wheels

from a baby carriage and straps made from your old belts? I'll have it ready, wheels, straps and all, by the time you and Patrol are ready for it."

Sure enough, the cart was ready when Patrol was ready to start walking. There didn't seem to be any real problems with the cart and he learned to avoid obstacles which would catch the cart's wheels.

It was a week after bone surgery when the areas of damaged skin were showing more extensive damage than I had anticipated. The dead skin had started peeling off like a bad sunburn on a human's back except Patrol was losing the fullness of his skin, not just a few superficial layers. It was time for skin to be grafted. Finding enough healthy skin to move around was like working a picture puzzle with some of the parts missing. Dr. Rudy and Dr. Wilson, my small animal surgery instructors at Ohio State, would probably have negative comments about my grafting technique, but the teachers didn't have a patient with as much skin damage as my patient. The grafting of the skin taken from the lower flank and abdomen to replace the dead skin of the leg was the most difficult part of the procedure, but the graft held and was functional regardless of the technique.

The hospital staff didn't like the name Patrol, so some called him 'Froze' and some called him "Friz" after 'Dog you had your butt frozen.' The name 'Friz' stuck.

The veterinary technician, who did most of the daily therapy, flagged me down two weeks after skin surgery to report Friz's progress. "Doc, Friz is starting to use his left rear leg to bear some weight. Do you think we can take him out of that cumbersome cart and let him walk on three legs?"

"It has been three weeks since bone surgery. We might as well give it a try. If he is able to stand and move a little on three legs, call the dog warden to come and take a look at his frozen dog. I would like for him to do some of the nursing he promised he would do. I'm also afraid Friz will become a permanent fixture

in this place if we don't get him out of here soon."

Friz looked quite happy about standing on three legs and being out of the cart. He soon taught himself to shift most of his weight to his front legs and do a balancing act with his rear feet off the ground without support. I wish I had owned a video camera way back then. The film would have shown how he learned to walk on his front legs to survive; not to perform on his front legs like a circus dog.

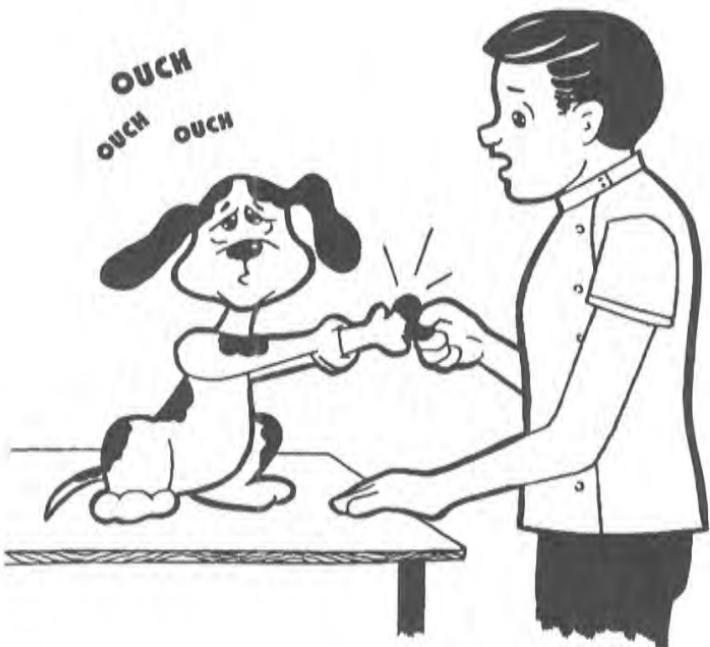
"Bob, I know you have stopped and visited with your dog through all these weeks of hospitalization, but it's now time for you to take him home. The weather has warmed up enough so that he can be outside without too much worry, but keep him on a leash. I don't think he has enough skin left for anymore grafting, so keep him out of the road."

"Doc, I thank you, and Friz thanks you along with the promise that he won't go onto the road again."

"I'll need him back in about four more weeks to remove the steel pins from his legs. The wire will stay in his pelvis forever."

The dog warden brought Friz back with a smiling face for his four-week checkup. The leg bones were healed enough to remove the steel pins, and the hair on most of the grafted areas was growing and covering the surgical scars. The grafted skin from the abdomen to the leg didn't have much hair to begin with, so Friz had a bald spot at the knee. Friz didn't seem to mind the bald spot or the big nipple on his knee that jiggled each time he took a step.

I lost track of Bob and Friz after Bob moved south for his retirement.





## TWO BLACK TOES

"Look what a beagle did to my arm, Doc. I was trying to get her out of a steel-jawed trap and she bit me."

"Those are nasty looking puncture wounds. Why didn't you go to the emergency room? You know I can't treat humans. Al, why did you stop here?"

"Doc, I didn't stop for you to treat my arm, I brought in the biting beagle for a rabies test. I have her out in the back of my truck in a borrowed dog box and I'm not going to touch that mean little beagle again."

"Whoa, now, Al. You have a mean, biting beagle and you want me to get it out of the dog box in your truck? I thought you were a one hundred percent cat lover who hated dogs?"

"Doc, I don't like dogs but I am not going to leave a dog caught in a steel-jawed trap to suffer and die. I was out in my yard when I heard the most pitiful whining down by the creek. I had to go down to see what was wrong. I found a beagle with her front paw caught in a steel jawed trap. When I tried to release her, she bit me on the arm. She wouldn't let me touch her after that, so I ended up putting my foot on her neck and pinning her head to the ground. Then I was able to release the pressure of the spring trap and free her paw. I used my belt as a leash and took her to the house. I borrowed my neighbor's dog box and brought her to you for a rabies test."

"After that story and seeing your arm, I'll get her." I opened the dog box and a young female beagle came hobbling out

to me on three legs. She seemed so pathetic but she wasn't aggressive or biting. I carefully avoided touching the dangling leg and picked her up and took her into the hospital.

"Al, you did what a lot of people do. You rushed in to help an injured animal without thinking. You went to the source of the pain, not thinking you would be causing more pain to the animal. Animals react to pain the only way they know how and that is usually by biting the person causing the pain. The beagle breed is not usually mean, but she was in greater pain when you moved the trap so she bit you. She didn't know you were trying to help her. I'll take care of the dog and you get yourself to the emergency room and get your arm cared for."

"Doc, what about rabies? Are you going to test her for rabies?"

"I'll quarantine her which is the first part of checking for infectious rabies. Now, get your arm cared for and let me worry about her paw and the possibility of rabies."

I put the little beagle under anesthesia and cleaned up the mashed, black toes. The jaws of the trap had snapped shut on only two of the four toes. She was a lucky beagle. The two mutilated toes had to be removed but we saved enough of the paw so she would be able to use the leg when the paw healed. Two weeks of quarantine passed and there was no evidence of rabies. She would have been dead if she had contagious rabies at the time she had bitten Al. The bandages and sutures were removed and everything looked like it was healing as we hoped. We knew the use of the paw would take time, so we tried to find the owner. The humane society and the ads in the newspaper didn't find the young beagle's owner. I was now the keeper of a limping rabbit dog. As usual, the kennel boy had to put a name to her. He liked Two Toes, but shortened it to Two.

It was home-hunting time, so I asked a few of my rabbit hunting friends if they would like to have a free beagle. The hunters liked her looks but turned her down for a hunting dog because of the limping. Two wasn't offended. She was starting to like her hospital treatment, but the natural instincts to hunt were coming out. She wanted to go out and run but I couldn't turn her loose in an open field. I exercised her in a fenced yard. When she was running she moved as if nothing was wrong with her paw. It was one of those times while playing outside that Junior came up and leaned on the fence to talk.

"Doc, my old beagle's heart seems to be acting up again. She can't go a hundred feet without stopping to sit down and gasp for air. She is okay walking around the house but she can't run and hunt."

"Junior, you're probably right about the heart, she wasn't doing too well the last time I examined her. She hasn't responded well to the new heart medicine. I think you now have a pet, not a hunter."

"I see you are exercising your new beagle. Are you taking up rabbit hunting?"

Two walked slowly up to me as Junior was talking and the limp was obvious.

"No, I am not taking up rabbit hunting. How would you like a young, free but limping, untested in the field, rabbit dog?"

"Doc, are you sure she is free?"

Junior has always been tight with the buck and always was looking for a good deal.

"I've got a deal for you. I'll give her to you and guarantee she will hunt or you can bring her back. Try her for two weeks and then you can keep her or return her."

"Will you send along a two week supply of food?"

"No! But I won't charge you for her vaccinations."

Junior didn't bring her back but he talked to all of his rabbit hunting friends about the deal he had gotten from Doctor Baker.

He talked too much about 'the best rabbit dog he ever owned'. His talk caused me to get inquiries which I didn't need or want.

One of those inquiries was more of a demand than an inquiry. A gentleman, and I use the term loosely, informed me I had given his prize female away. I knew this guy as a fast dog dealer, so I had to watch my every step.

"Doctor Baker, you gave away my last female of a championship breeding line. You gave her to a guy who is just a rabbit hunter, not a breeder of fine dogs. He won't give her back to me. That female is a champion and I have the perfect male for her. The pups will be worth several hundred dollars and I want my dog back!"

"Sir, only an owner can describe their dog in detail and that is what you must do. I won't take back what I have given away without good reason. You must give me some information that only the dog owner would know."

"Doc, she has some unusual markings. Her toes are all white. There isn't a brown or black hair on her paws."

I knew Two wasn't his dog because the two toes which were removed were black. I figured this guy had noticed Two's three white feet and the two remaining white toes on the fourth foot and assumed the missing toes were also white. I had to be diplomatic, but how can you be when dealing with a liar.

"Sir, she might be yours so let me get your bill before going to Junior's."

"What do you mean get my bill? You gave the dog to Junior."

"Sir, if she is your valuable breeding dog and I saved her life you will pay for services."

"Well, how much is the bill on the three legged dog?"

"The emergency surgery, the hospitalization, the medicines given, and then the boarding while she was recovering comes to six hundred ninety-seven dollars and forty-three cents. Let's go out to Junior's place and see if she is your dog."

Stuttering a shocked reply, he said, "Doc, I can't go with you this very minute. I'll get back with you in a few days."

"Sir, I don't know what Junior will charge you for boarding your dog, so don't wait too long in getting back with me."

I didn't hear another word from this phony.

When I told Junior about the dog dealer wanting his dog he said he might pay five hundred dollars for Two now that he knew what a good dog she is.

That was ten years ago and Junior is still the owner of Two. Just the other day he was telling me she was slowing down a little, but she was at just the right speed for an older rabbit hunter. We still laugh about the dog hater saving Two from the steel trap and the dog dealer trying to steal her.



## CHOW DOG

"It's about time you got back. Paula from the sheriff's office has been trying to find you. A deputy named Dominic wants to talk to you about something."

"June, it's only one o'clock. I thought I was doing pretty good. I had a sandwich, got the truck greased and the oil changed in less than an hour. You are starting to fuss and worry about me more than my wife does. Did Paula say if Dom wanted me for veterinary stuff or something related to my county commissioner job?"

"She didn't say but I'll get her back on the phone, as I promised."

"Buzz me when you get Dom on the line."

It wasn't long before June buzzed me to pick up the phone. "Hello, this is Doctor Baker. How may I help you?"

"Doc, this is Deputy Dominic. Thanks for returning my call. I need your help!"

"Hi, Dom. Do you need veterinary help or county commissioner help?"

"Doc, it's a little bit of both but let me give you a short rundown of what is going on before you say no."

"Go ahead, I'll listen until it gets too deep."

"The old man who called you this morning has been calling everyone in Lawrence County. So, the sheriff is sending a deputy out to take a look at what is bothering him."

"How did you know an old man had called me? He wanted

me to go on to private property and take some dogs to the dog pound. He must have talked for twenty minutes before he realized I couldn't help him. I finally got through to him that he needed to call the dog warden."

"The old man told me he had called you and several other elected county officials, along with the dog warden, and no one would do anything about the dogs. He said the governor was next on his list if the sheriff didn't do something. So the sheriff ordered me to investigate and that is where I need your help. You are a veterinarian and an expert on cruelty to animals. Plus, there are other things about these dogs I can't talk about over the phone."

"Dom, I'm not doing much on this rainy afternoon. I owe you for the help you gave me when my truck was stolen, so I'll meet you at the house where the dogs are in thirty minutes. I must be back by four o'clock for my evening office hours. Does that give you enough time or do you want to put it off?"

"That's fine. I'll meet you at the house."

Just talking to the old man this morning was quite a task. He rattled on about so many different things that I never quite figured out just what he wanted from me. I only knew he was having problems with a renter who owned some mean Chow dogs.

I didn't really want to go onto property where Chow's are used as guard dogs. I would go with the deputy, who would make it legal, and his mace and/or thirty-eight would protect me from bodily injury. I loaded my black medicine bag in the pickup and was on my way.

It was a miserable day. The gray overcast skies which blessed me with intermittent spurts of rain made the roads slippery and driving uncomfortable. I made it to the house by two o'clock. Deputy Dom was there going through his nervous pacing that he always does when he must wait for someone. His pacing was a little different this time. He was staying just out of the range of a chow that was guarding the house. The Chow had a heavy collar and chain to keep him in his boundaries.

The Chow had his lips curled up showing the world his big, white teeth which demanded respect. Dom was showing him the deserved respect. I received the same greeting, but along with the teeth I received a rolling type growl which sank into a little deeper tone and meaning. He was choking himself by pulling against the chain as he tried to get to us.

As I neared Dom, the Chow backed off a few steps. I thought he was trying to relieve his choking. I was wrong. He took two steps forward and was into a leaping attack at me. He scared me but the chain and collar held firm. Thank the Lord. As the Chow was airborne, the chain stretched as far as it was going to stretch and snapped taunt, flipping the Chow's rear end around and slapped his tail end down a foot from my feet. He caught his breath and was back on his feet growling at us.

"Hi, Dom. Aren't you going to introduce me to your friend?"

"Hi, Doc. This dog has warned us not to trespass on his guarded property. He will do bodily damage if we get within his reach. I think his self introduction will suffice for now."

"I just saw his warning and I respect him! Now, what do we do?"

"Doc, I am here to investigate an animal abuse complaint although the complainer hasn't shown his face. Hey, Doc, you're the expert, what do you want to do now?"

"Well....I don't see a scrap of food or a bowl of water. While you were walking back and forth, did you see anything that looks like food or water?"

"Doc, under the bush by the porch is a bucket laying on its side that might have been the water bucket. And there is one dried out piece of bone over by the window but I haven't seen a food bowl or a spot where there might have been food placed recently."

"Let's just stand out of his range a little and talk about this situation. If we turn sideways enough so we can still see him but not eyeball to eyeball, he might settle down."

"Do you believe he will settle down?"

"No, but we can decide what is the proper thing to do for this dog, other than shoot his owner."

"Do you want me to go get the old man? I know where he lives."

"No, Dom! I would rather tackle the Chow than listen to the old man again. We are here for an animal abuse case, not a case to be abused by humans."

Our conversation came to a sudden halt as a cloud burst hit us. We headed for the patrol car. The Chow headed for shelter but there was no shelter for him. He hunkered down at the corner of the house and got soaked.

"Dom, if this rain stops I am getting the Chow out of these elements."

"Doc, I'll help you but don't expect too much. I am a good shot with this thirty-eight, if it comes to that. What do you plan to do?"

"We will restrain him enough for me to get an injection into him which will knock him out. Then I can get him to the clinic."

The rain stopped as quickly as it started and the sun was trying to push through the thinning clouds.

"Dom, let's get on with our game with the Chow. I see he is shaking himself trying to get dry."

Dom and I got out of the car and watched the Chow resume his role of guard dog as he heard Dom's car doors slam shut. We walked around to the back of the house, looking for something to hold the dog with while I got the medicine injected. We found a couple of tightly webbed lawn chairs. We looked like a couple of Knights in Armor as we approached the Chow with the lawn chairs raised to attack position. It might have looked quite silly but we were able to pin the Chow to the side of the house and I got the shot into the muscle. We backed off and waited for the shot to take effect.

"Doc, how long will it take for the shot to take the growl

out of that dog?"

"Dom, it will take about thirty minutes. Do you want to check the Chow dogs in the house while we wait?"

"Doc, I don't have a search warrant and don't ever plan on going into that house with those other Chows running free."

"Just because they barked and jumped at every window we walked by doesn't make them mean dogs."

"Doc, I'll back you up if you want to investigate."

"Dom, didn't you see the automatic feeder and bucket of water when you looked in the window of the garage? I can't see animal abuse just because they are kept in the house while the owner is away. The house might be abused but not the dogs. The guy that owns the house gets to worry about the house abuse. I am just a veterinarian who will be on vacation if you call for anymore expert help at this house. Let's go sit in the truck and wait for the drugs to take hold. I brought some coffee if you care to join me. Oh, what was it you couldn't tell me over the phone?"

"Let's go to the truck and I'll tell you over a cup of coffee."

We got settled in the truck and were sipping coffee as Dom told the story.

"Doc, I can't tell you very much about the renter. He moved here last fall from some place in Virginia or West Virginia and I believe it was the F.B.I. who asked the sheriff to keep an eye on him. The sheriff's office knew about this guy before the old man called this morning because we have been keeping a casual surveillance on him. I don't know for sure, but I think it is drug related. We know he leaves the area every week or so for three days and then he is back. We have watched a girl come in every day to feed and water the dogs until this current absence of the renter. Since we are not watching the house twenty-four hours a day, I can't tell you if the girl has been here or not. She hasn't kept the same schedule as she did in the past."

"Now you tell me about all the bad stuff after I committed myself to taking care of a dog I just gave a tranquilizer shot!"

Someone had better let me know when this guy hits town again. Pet owners will do bodily harm to people who mess with their pets and this guy doesn't sound like a nice guy to start with."

The drugs worked the way they were made to work and the Chow was out. I put a muzzle on his nose and taped his legs together just in case he wakes up on the way to the clinic. Everything went well, so I said goodbye to Dom and headed back to the clinic.

Three days of good food and water changed the Chow's attitude toward me, but I still didn't trust him. I was in a bind, no one had inquired about the dog or the dog's owner. I guess I will need to turn him over to the dog warden in a few days if no one shows up. I had the Chow for four days when June hunted me down in the back of the clinic to tell me a very upset person, who she guessed was the Chow's owner, was on the phone.

"Hello, this is Doctor Baker. How may I help you?"

"Are you the guy who has my dog?"

"Sir, quit hollering at me and calm down. I don't even know to whom I'm speaking, let alone know if I have your dog. Did someone bring your dog to the clinic for treatment?"

"The sheriff's office told me you picked up my dog for inhumane treatment."

"Sir, four days ago I assisted a deputy sheriff pick up a Chow dog which was being abused. The dog was chained to a house and it didn't have food, water, or shelter from the elements. The neighbors had made a report to the sheriff's office about inhumane treatment and how mean the dog was. They said the dog was so mean they couldn't get close enough to even give it food or water. The neighbors also told the sheriff the dog's owner had been gone for three or four days. The neighbors said they didn't really know the dog's owner but they thought the guy had skipped town. The sheriff asked me to assist because the dog warden was off work due to sickness and the dog was so mean it couldn't be handled by deputies. The sheriff had two choices, either have a

deputy shoot the dog to put it out of its misery or get a veterinarian to knock the dog out and take care of it. He didn't want to kill the dog. Is that the dog you are talking about?"

"You had no business taking my dog."

"Now, with that answer I'll assume the Chow is yours. Sir, I don't have to take any of your abuse. You can calm down and talk like a gentleman or I'll swear out a warrant against you for inhumane treatment and animal abuse. Now, can you talk to me like a human being or do I call a judge and the sheriff?"

"I am sorry but you had no right to pick up my dog just because I was out of town."

"Sir, I picked up an abused animal! I don't know you and I didn't know where the owner was or if they were coming back, nor did I care. I had a big problem which needed solved and I solved it. Sir, the law says the veterinarian is the expert on animal health and animal abuse. I feel a moral obligation, along with my professional obligations, to assist a law enforcement agency when animals are involved. So, you are all wrong when you said I had no business picking up your dog. I do have those rights and obligations to help enforce animal abuse laws. Now, do you want to talk to the law or talk about your abused dog?"

"I am sorry, Doctor, for hollering at you but my girlfriend was supposed to be caring for my animals."

"Sir, she wasn't taking care of this one! Do you want your dog?"

"Yes, Doctor, I want my dog but I am moving to a house in West Virginia today. I can't pick him up until tomorrow. Will you take care of him until then?"

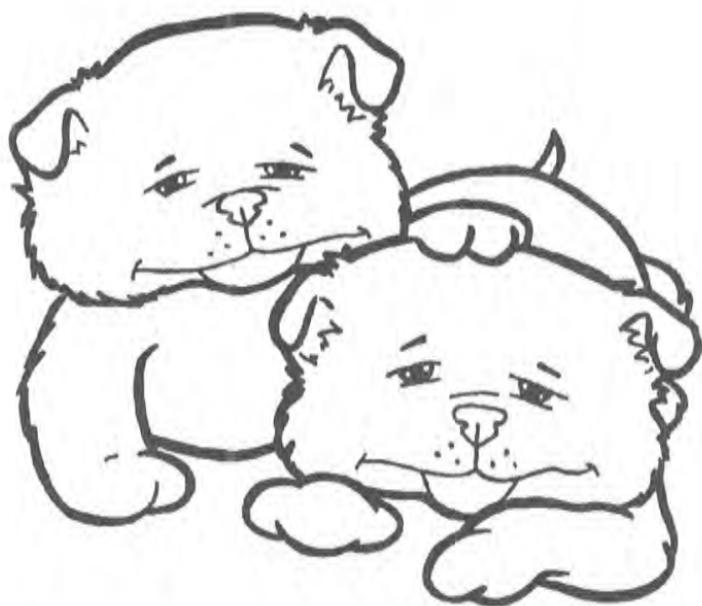
"I'll keep him for you until tomorrow. You can pick him up after ten in the morning. Sir, if you don't show up I'll be forced by Ohio law to send him to the dog pound."

His tone changed. "Thank you, Doctor. I'll pick him up between ten and eleven."

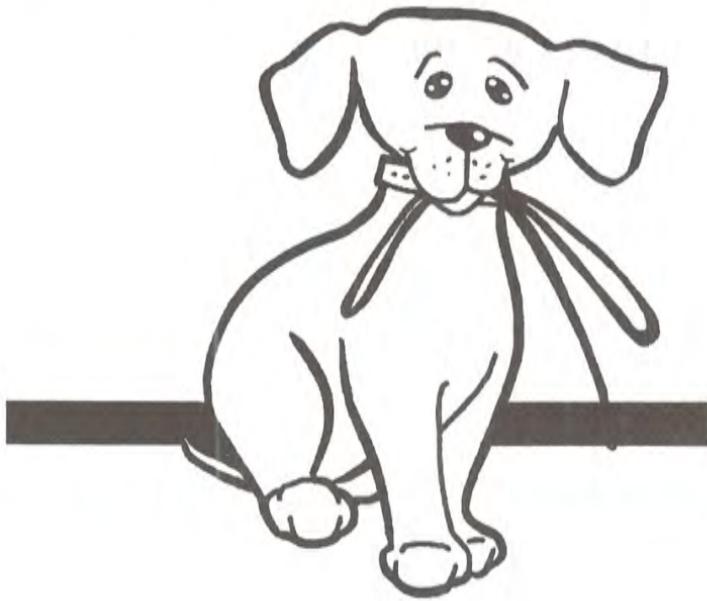
The man was at June's desk at ten. June said he was a per-

fect gentleman and had a roll of money big enough to choke a horse when he paid his bill. The kennel boy walked the Chow dog out to a surprised owner. The owner didn't think his dog could be nice to anyone but him. He and his dog walked out the front door never to be seen by us again.

A week or so later a West Virginia newspaper reported that a man from Huntington, West Virginia with the same name as the Chow dog's owner was picked up in Virginia for transporting drugs. I wondered if it was the same guy, and if so, who was feeding his guard dogs.



**TO THE  
EXERCISE RUN**



## IT IS UNUSUALLY QUIET

Something is wrong! No one is greeting me at work this morning. Where is Frank? Why isn't Blonco giving me her happy 'you made it to work' bark this morning. She usually has a happy tone to her bark in the mornings. Every light in the hospital is on for Frank to do his morning work but he and Blonco are unusually quiet. Something must be wrong! Where are they?

Sixteen years ago we had a young high school boy who worked each night after school for two hours and also worked weekends as kennel help. One night he wasn't working but there he was timidly approaching me as if he was about to ask for a loan. He didn't ask for cash, but he nervously asked, "May I keep the two white puppies the lady brought in for euthanasia?"

The puppies couldn't be a week old and their mother had been killed by a car last night. He wanted to keep the puppies to raise and maybe find them homes.

"Jerry, it might sound cold and cruel but the lady who brought the puppies to us was trying to do the humane thing. She couldn't raise the puppies and thought it was more humane if I would euthanize them before they painfully lingered through starvation to a pitiful death. She is the owner and I must honor her request. She told me if I could give the pups to someone who could raise them properly, it would be okay with her."

"Doc, you can't kill them just because their mother was killed!"

"Young man, you haven't worked here long enough to see the abuse man does to animals and I won't become a part of abus-

ing animals. Yes, I can perform the act of euthanasia and I will before I see those pups starve. I appreciate your good intentions but I must be realistic. You do not have the training in feeding puppies, let alone the time to give them food every two to four hours. How do you intend to get the work done the mother usually does?"

"Doc, I can do it with some help. If you teach me how to feed the pups I am sure the other staff members will help me. I know Frank can help me in the morning and the night crew will care for the pups at night and I can care for the pups in the evenings and on weekends."

"It looks like you have just saved two white puppies."

"Thanks, Doc, now what do I do?"

"First, you must learn these are fragile little creatures who must be treated gently but firmly. Secondly, the puppies will dehydrate very rapidly if they don't nurse frequently and these pups haven't eaten since last night. They are hungry and weak from dehydration. I'll feed them the first time by stomach tube and hope they regain enough strength to nurse when you start bottle feeding them. Watch me feed the first pup with a stomach tube and then I'll show you how to feed the second. You can do the feeding by bottle or stomach tube as needed to keep their bellies full. The puppies do not have their eyes or ears open so they are less than a week old. What that means is, you must keep them warm, fed, cleaned off, and even stimulate their bowels to move. You get the incubator working while I get the formula for their first feeding."

Jerry was fast at learning the different things that must be done to raise puppies, along with getting everyone in the hospital to help him care for these pups. Time flies and the pups were eating mushy puppy food before they were four weeks old. I took care of the worming and vaccinations and even some of the special loving attention given to our pups. It came time to find homes for these two white beagle-looking puppies, but no one at the hospital

wanted to look for homes for our happy orphans.

"Jerry, it is time to get these puppies into homes. You did a good job in raising them to this point but they need a happy, loving home to grow up in, not a hospital."

"Doc, I can't take them home and I hate to part with them. They are becoming part of our everyday life here in the hospital. Can we keep them?"

"Jerry, there is no way we can keep them! This is an animal hospital, not a humane society! Put a sign up in our waiting room announcing that we have two puppies who need happy homes."

Jerry put up his sign and the little male pup was taken within two days, but it took about a week for the female to find a happy home. It took only a week for the female to be returned because she couldn't be housebroken. The pup would play outside but would do her business in the house. The raising of the pup in a cage in a hospital had trained it to do its business indoors and none of the four new owners who tried to housebreak her could do it. We got her back and when she turned six months of age, I spayed her. I didn't need a female in heat stirring up the male dogs in the hospital.

Jerry was taking Spanish and named her Blonco which means white in Spanish. Blonco became the hospital dog for the next seventeen years and she became everyone's pet. Jerry moved on to college and Frank became the keeper of Blonco.

The years rolled by and Blonco learned to announce anything that wasn't supposed to happen in the hospital with coded tones to her barking. She greeted us as we came in to work with a special bark or she had another bark for anyone who wasn't supposed to be in the back part of the hospital. She trained us to respond to her commands when there were strangers in the hospital or to her wants to go into the exercise runs to do her business. On occasion, she reminded us it was feeding time and she hadn't been fed on her schedule. She also saved a few fellow dogs by donating

blood. At times, when she was loose, she would stop at a hospitalized dog's cage to give a reassuring bark to say everything was going to be okay. She was a bundle of happy dog.

The years passed and Jerry, along with other ex-employees, would stop in to visit with Blonco when they were in town. She remembered all of them.

A few weeks ago she had a kidney flare up which required special treatment and a special diet. Her recovery was uneventful, but the kidneys were damaged a little. I was afraid of kidney failure before too long but she wasn't vomiting until yesterday. I blamed the pizza that someone was so kind to have shared with her for yesterday's vomiting. I now wonder if it was the pizza or the kidneys failing. Where are Frank and Blonco?

I searched through the hospital and couldn't find any sign of them. A little panic set in so I even checked Blonco's cage to see if there had been any vomiting during the night. It was clean.

I couldn't imagine what had happened to those two. I went out the side door and through the parking lot searching and I found nothing. Bad thoughts were entering my mind. I'll bet Frank is over the hill at our private animal cemetery. Oh, he wouldn't do that without telling me first.

Another trip of searching through the hospital and then I heard the back door slam. I went to see what was going on and met Frank coming up the hall. "Frank, where is Blonco? Where have you been? I don't hear her barking?"

"Doc, she and I went for a morning walk. She demanded a trip outside this morning so I took her for a long walk. We went about a half mile at her slow pace and she was ready to come home."

"Frank, where is she now?"

"Well, when we got back to the hospital she headed for the exercise runs. That's where she is now, doing her business."

"The environmental people will never have to worry about Blonco polluting the outdoors. Everything is normal, go to work

Frank!"

P.S. It was about eighteen months later we came into a quiet workplace. We buried Blonco in our private pet cemetery over the hill.



## THE DUMB BLONDE

"Doc, that blonde is built like a brick outhouse and she is crying her eyes out."

"June, what in the world are you talking about?"

I was just finishing the afternoon hospital rounds when June, my receptionist, with her ornery smile had interrupted everything with that outburst.

"Doc, it's the blonde in the waiting room. She stepped on her puppy and it looks like she has broken its' front leg."

"Get her into the exam room and I'll be there in a minute."

The 'built like a brick outhouse' statement brought my kennel boy out of a 'doing-nothing-but-trying-to-look-like-I-am-working' appearance to a willing volunteer for extra work.

"Doc, I'll help you, I'm just about finished with this job. I'm good at holding puppies."

"Yep, you are good at holding puppies and looking at blondes."

We had nicknamed this kennel boy 'Dandy' as in 'Isn't he a dandy' and he lived up to his nickname.

"Dandy, help June get the blonde and her pup into the exam room and keep your eyeballs in your head. Stay there in case I need you."

Basically, I am a timid, bashful person who tries to avoid being alone with outgoing women and I didn't know what to expect after June's description of this blonde. Dandy would be there just in case a rumor would get back to my wife. Then again, maybe I was just dreaming.

As I entered the exam room, it was quite obvious that she was built like a brick outhouse and the puppy had a dangling broken front leg. The blonde was there only to get her puppy cared for, not to see me. June hadn't mentioned that this blonde must have been the model used for the 'dumb blonde' jokes, but she had all the attributes for the job.

She was crying and with each sob she would shake the puppy. Oh, boy. With each shake the broken leg would vibrate causing more pain and the puppy would let out ear piercing cries for help. The cries of pain didn't seem to register with this blonde. I couldn't help but think, 'Why such a pretty wrapping around such an empty package?' I had to get the pup out of her hands.

"Here now, Ma'am. Let me take your puppy. June, get the lady some tissues while I look at the leg."

She had to be the dumbest blonde coming down the pike to hold the puppy that way. She had her hands around the little thing's chest with his feet dangling out into space and she wasn't supporting the broken leg in any fashion. It's a wonder the puppy didn't eat her up when she inflicted the pain with her shaking. Well, anyway, I had the puppy now and it was resting on the exam table.

"Ma'am, the front leg is fractured at the spot where you can see the radius and ulna make the sharp turn to the left. You can also see some swelling developing in that foot. I'll get the puppy under anesthesia, get some x-rays, and then put the leg back into its proper position. I don't know if I will be putting the leg into a cast or a splint but we should be able to fix the fracture."

"Oh, thank you, Doctor! What time can I take him home tonight?"

I couldn't help but think this women hadn't heard me tell her the leg was broken and I would have the puppy under an anesthetic to reduce the fracture. Maybe I made it sound too easy. Oh, well,

keep going, Doctor, you will get your job done.

"Ma'am, with everything we have to do your puppy will be staying with us tonight. I'll have June call you when we are out of surgery today and you call us in the morning after nine-thirty."

I hate to say 'it's a routine fracture' because it is anything but routine to the pet or the pet's owner. A fracture in this area is very routine to us unless it is complicated by being compounded or fragmented. I got the puppy under an anesthetic, took the x-rays, and found this fracture to be relatively routine. I applied a fiberglass cast to the leg to hold the fractured bone together.

"Dandy, you are a good assistant but you really didn't need to keep telling me about the beauty of the blonde while I was working on the pup's broken leg. Remember, I was there and could see what you were staring at."

"Sorry, Doc, but isn't she something else with a few marbles missing? I'll bet she won't protect your pretty cast. Do you want me to spray it with 'N.O.' to stop the pup from chewing on the cast when he wakes up?"

'N.O.' is a nasty tasting spray we use to keep the animals from chewing on their bandages and casts. The N.O. spray is actually a mating repellent when sprayed on the rear of a female in heat. The odors of being in heat are supposed to be masked over by the N.O. spray.

"Yes, put a heavy coat of the stuff on the cast."

The puppy was ready to go home the next day. June got the blonde into the examination room for my special instructions on bone healing and how to take care of the cast. I went through all of my 'home care things' lecture and Dandy brought the puppy into the exam room and placed it on the floor. The puppy bounced around the tightly dressed blonde on his three good legs without showing much concern for the cast. The puppy was excited about seeing his owner and the blonde was overjoyed with her puppy. The crying blonde of yesterday was all smiles today.

"Dandy, get the puppy up on the table so I can show Ms. G. a little more about spraying the cast to keep the puppy from chewing on it."

Dandy held the puppy and the blonde watched as I turned to get the can of 'N.O.' spray from the cabinet.

"Ma'am, I cannot overemphasize the importance of your job in keeping the pup from chewing on his cast. If the puppy chews a hole in the cast an unequal pressure point develops and more damage is done to the fractured leg. Now, watch as I spray the cast because this stuff will stop the puppy from chewing on it."

"What is that stuff? Really, Doc, what is that stuff?"

"Ma'am, it is actually a mating repellent - -" I didn't get another word out of my mouth before she had jumped away from the table and squealed.

"Don't get any of that stuff on me!"

Dandy was all but on the floor laughing and I was trying to keep my composure. I couldn't. I had to turn my head. I couldn't keep from laughing. I laughed so hard I embarrassed myself. June had been peeking through the exam room door's window and came to our rescue.

"Ma'am, don't worry about those nuts, this stuff doesn't work on humans. Now, let me make an appointment for next week to get that cast checked by the doctor."





## WAS SHE DUMB

There are times in our lives when we look back at some event which seemed funny at the time but as time passes and new information accumulates, our concepts change. Was the Dumb Blonde's response to the NO Spray really as funny as we thought it was at the time? The information Dandy supplied has distorted my memory of the Dumb Blonde story.

Dandy, the kennel boy in the 'Dumb Blonde' story, moved to Montana when he was seventeen years old and I have only had contact with him through birthday cards and telephone calls for the past twenty years. As coincidences happen, Dandy called me after I had finished the 'Applesauce Dogs' story and I told him I was writing a book. W-E-L-L, Dandy asked to read some of my stories.

"Dandy, you are a stock broker, what makes you want to read my stories?"

"Doc, my family has dogs and horses and I know you, so I thought your stories would be interesting. I might even have some editing suggestions."

The following week Dandy was on the phone again. "Doc, I liked your Applesauce Dog story, but you have to write about the prostitute!"

"What are you talking about? I don't remember any prostitutes."

"How could you forget the crying blonde who broke her puppy's leg when she stepped on it?"

"I didn't know she was a prostitute. She is my blonde in the Dumb Blonde story. Dandy, how did you know she was a prostitute?"

"Doc, I didn't know her the way you are probably thinking I knew her. Remember, I worked for you and with what you paid, it was hardly enough to keep gas in my old car, let alone have a social life."

"I paid you what you were worth, and maybe overpaid you at times. How is that for a response, Dandy?"

"Doc, all joking aside, I thought I had told you about talking to the blonde's boyfriend -- pimp. He was the guy who brought her and the puppy to the hospital."

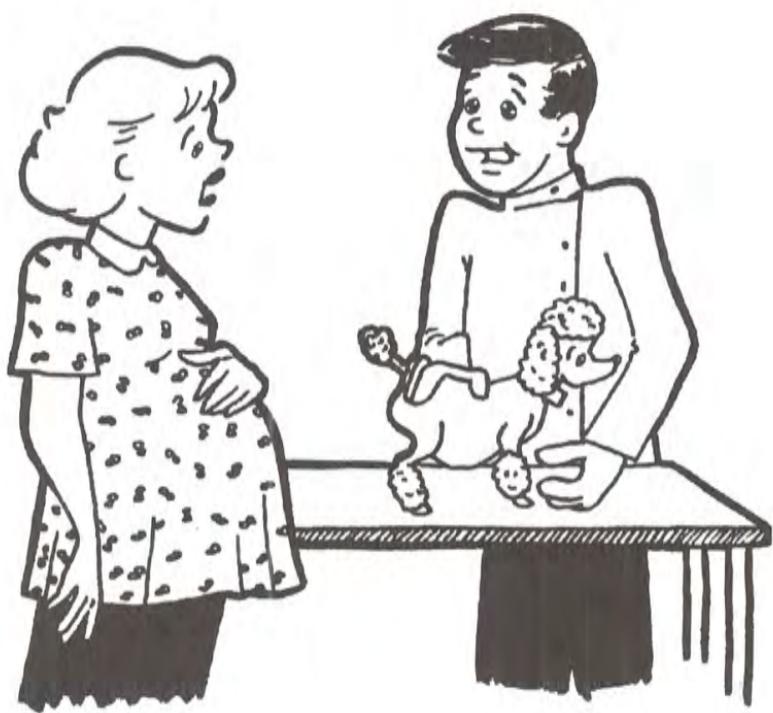
"Dandy, I have trouble remembering yesterday, let alone twenty years ago, refresh my memory."

"I am sure I told you about him trying to sell me her services to pay your veterinary bill. Honest, Doc, she was a prostitute. As I remember, he offered to drive me around the countryside while she conducted her services in the back seat."

"That story is hard for me to believe, but since it's you telling me, I'll believe it."

After the phone call, I had a little reevaluating to do on the 'Dumb Blonde' story. It is still funny the way she jumped back from the table when I sprayed her puppy's cast with the mating repellent. I don't think she had enough smarts to think quickly enough about the spray hurting her business. Then again, maybe she wasn't a 'Dumb Blonde' but just a good business woman.

Oh, W-E-L-L....she will remain my dumb blonde regardless of what she did for a living.





ANOTHER BLONDE, BUT SHE IS  
PREGNANT  
AND SO IS HER POODLE

"Doc, before you start chewing me out, take a minute and listen to this pregnant woman. You know pregnant women are sometimes hard to get along with and you men owe us a little sympathy time. I don't want you to get mad at me, but, and you had better not say anything about butts, I want you to hear my side of why I'm here today."

"Betty, I haven't said one word except, 'Good Morning' and you know very well I didn't have anything to do with your pregnancy or your butt. Now, back off. Why are you jumping all over me, anyway?"

"To tell you the truth I thought you would bawl me out for having Cindy out running around in the car."

"It was just two weeks ago I examined her, everything was okay. I told you to let your pregnant Cindy be a dog and have her pups. I also told you not to take her out for car rides because she gets too hyper in a car. Do you remember me telling you that you might cause early labor? Now, why do you have her out today, is something wrong?"

"No, Doc, nothing is wrong but I thought you should check her again."

When Betty's gynecologist told her that her expected delivery date was the same day as I predicted for Cindy's whelping, things seemed to change. She started telling her doctor what I said

about Cindy's pregnancy and telling me about what he said about her pregnancy. It seemed like a little game of pitting doctor against doctor without realizing the professions have many differences. Pregnant women do odd things at times.

"Well, Betty, why do you think I should be checking Cindy today? She is in her last week of pregnancy."

"That's it, Doc, the last week of pregnancy. My doctor insisted on weekly checks at the end of my pregnancy so I figured if it was important for me to be checked, you should check Cindy."

"Okay, let me check her since you've brought her, but I would have preferred you not taking her out in the car. She gets so excited riding in a car."

The quick checkup on an excited, pregnant poodle found everything as normal as could be. "Betty, everything is okay. She will probably have three pups in about a week. You'll need to have someone else bring the pups in for tail docking and dew claw removal when they are three to five days old. You will be busy with your own new baby by then."

"Oh, Doctor Baker, you make me feel so much better by telling me everything is okay."

"Betty, let her be a pregnant dog and don't take her out in the car."

"Well, Doc, I'll take her home and go on to my doctor's appointment. I think I can make it on time."

The pregnancies I went through with my wife should have taught me that pregnant women have no sense of humor, especially in those last weeks. I had forgotten the rule fathers-to-be must always follow:

'Thou shall never make fun of a mother-to-be.'

But, when Betty said she had to go see her doctor my lips moved and out came words that shouldn't have been spoken.

"Betty, it's too bad you couldn't save the extra trip and both of you pregnant girls get examined together."

I thought it was a cute little joke, but Betty didn't. She took Cindy and with eardrum shaking loudness had these parting words, "You're not laying a hand on me!"



## BREAK IN

Babs yelled down the basement stairs, "Carl, Paula, the dispatcher from the sheriff's office, wants you on the phone."

Paula is a sweet girl but she wants me on the phone at least once a week with some kind of animal question. I haven't figured out why people call the sheriff's office about animal problems, but they do. Paula then calls me because I am a veterinarian and a county commissioner. Well, anyway, she calls quite frequently.

"Dear, ask her if I can call her back in fifteen minutes. I'm busy here in the basement."

"Carl, Paula says a deputy is at the clinic waiting for you. He thinks someone has broken in and might still be there."

"Ask Paula to radio the deputy and tell him I am on my way."

The half mile from the house to the office only takes a few minutes but it seems like forever when you are thinking about being robbed. I was getting quite upset just thinking about some low-life individual breaking into my office and doing all kinds of damage and stealing whatever he felt like taking. There was too much of my time and money invested to lose it to some bum. They could take my life's work in a few minutes. Oh, damn! Why me?

What I saw when I pulled into the parking lot didn't make me very happy. The deputy was standing there talking to some people who must have been attracted by the police car's lights. What was I to think about this deputy? He told the dispatcher someone might still be in my office and he is just standing there passing the time of day with a bunch of nosy people. The lacka-

daisical attitude taken by everyone seemed so unique while a robbery might be taking place within a few feet of them.

"Hi, Doc, what's the problem?", came from someone in the group of people as I got out of my truck.

"Don't know, but the deputy thinks I am being robbed."

The deputy pointed to the small broken window with the screen wire torn and bent to the outside wall of the building. My adrenaline was pumping and I was getting more excited and upset.

I hollered at the deputy, "What is going on?! What are you doing? Is there someone in there? Did you call for backup?"

The deputy was no rookie and he could see he had a very excited person to deal with. He hollered back at me.

"Doc! Doc, cool it! There hasn't been any noise from the inside of your building since I got here. I don't think anyone is in there now. If you will calm down a little, unlock the front door and turn on the lights, we will search the place."

I unlocked the door and inched my way across the ten foot wide waiting room toward the light switches that are in the receptionist's office. I couldn't help but wonder what kind of nut breaks into a veterinarian's office. I flipped the switches and to my surprise, the lights came on. I guess I had been watching too much TV where the crook always cuts off the electric.

The deputy told the minglers in a warning tone to stay outside. Some had started to follow us into the building.

The waiting room's only evidence of a robbery was the broken window. The receptionist's office had books and papers scattered all over, but the cash drawer hadn't been touched. We leave the cash drawer ajar with only change in it when we close each night and the change was still there.

"Well, deputy, who ever it was, wasn't looking for money. They must be after drugs and I don't have any." We slowly entered

the examination room and everything was in its proper place. Nothing appeared to have been touched. Then we went into the pharmacy and everything was in its place. I thought the medicines would be the target for a robbery but everything was where I had left it.

"Deputy, the door into the treatment area is always kept closed and it is open now. Do you think you might have scared the guy before he had a chance to get into the medicines?"

"Don't know, Doc, I didn't hear anything."

I followed the deputy now, he had his gun in one hand and his big flashlight in the other. We turned on all the lights as we headed back through the building toward the exercise runs. We searched every possible hiding place in every room very carefully and nothing had been bothered. We checked each ward and found the cages closed and the animals looking at us wondering why we had all the lights turned on. The two hall doors leading to the runs were open, they should have been closed. We worked our way to the back of the clinic where the exercise runs are located. We found another door open and the gate to an exercise run was off its' hinges and on the floor.

"Deputy, put your gun away, it's a 'breakout', not a break in. Duke, a big German Shepherd, was in that run when I left for home and now he is gone."

The deputy wanted to know if Duke was mean. My mentioning German Shepherd put fear into the deputy. He was more scared of the German Shepherd than he was of the potential robber.

"I guess he could be mean if you were to push him too much, but he is extra nice to us here at the clinic. He just needs people around him. He ignores the other animals when he is here and goes bonkers when left by himself."

The adrenaline was slowing down and relief was setting in where the tensions had been. I had to tell the deputy about Duke.

"Deputy, today was one of those unusual days. The

Holmes', the owners of Duke, came in this afternoon with a problem. They were having a family wedding and they were rushing to pick up the flowers in Huntington. To make things a little tighter on the wedding day, the doggie sitter had called and told them she was too sick to sit with Duke, so they had to do something with him. I told the Holmes we could take care of Duke through the day, but wanted to know when they would be picking him up tonight. That is when I learned they had planned on leaving him overnight, if we could handle him."

"Duke had never stayed with us overnight before and I didn't know how he would act when he was by himself. I told the Holmes' I might need to tranquilize him for the night. The owners approved."

"I told Mr. Holmes to go get his relative married and have a good time at the reception. I'd take care of Duke but just in case I needed to hunt him down I wanted him to leave a number where I could find him tonight."

"Doc, you tranquilized him and he took the gate off its' hinges, opened three doors, and then broke the front window and escaped?", questioned the deputy.

"No, there didn't seem to be a need to tranquilize him. He had laid over in the corner of June's office all afternoon. She put him into the exercise run and fed him and watched him yawn, stretch, and plop himself down into a sleeping position. I checked on him before I left for home and he was snoring away. I didn't think a tranquilizer was needed for a sleeping dog."

"Doc, you were wrong this time!"

"Yep, it turns out a tranquilizer would have saved us from this long evening. If you can wait just a minute I want to talk to you, but I must call my wife and let her know we had a dog break out rather than a crook break in."

"Doc, I'll radio the dispatcher and give my report while you call your wife."

We reported in and then talked a little. I thanked the

deputy for alerting me to the broken window and gave him Duke's description, down to the red collar with the Kentucky dog license number. He might happen across a lost German Shepherd.

The preacher at the church next door to the clinic came through the crowd of people and asked if he could be of any help. He was always helping me do something.

"Preacher, we thought we had a break in tonight, but we had a dog break out instead."

"Doc, it wouldn't happen to be a German Shepherd with a red collar, would it?"

"Yes, sir, a big, friendly German Shepherd. Have you seen him?"

"Doc, he is over at the front steps of the church. He's playing with the kids who just got out of evening Bible School."

"Thank you, again, Deputy. I'm going to church for a playful German Shepherd."

The preacher and I walked toward the church and Duke came bouncing up to us like we were long lost buddies. I thanked the preacher and Duke and I headed back to the clinic. The few people who were still hanging around saw Duke and 'sort of' disappeared as we approached. I guess they didn't trust any kind of German Shepherd. I got Duke back into the clinic and checked him over. I didn't find one scratch or bruise on him.

I called Duke's owner from June's office as Duke curled up in his corner and went back to sleep. Mr. Holmes said he could get to the office in an hour or two.

I cleaned up Duke's mess, covered the hole that was a window just a few hours ago and then I waited to be chewed out by Mr. Holmes. I just knew he would be mad at me.

Mr. Holmes came through the front door with a boisterous "Hello!". Duke, with tail wagging, was standing on his rear legs with his front paws on Mr. Holmes' chest before I had a chance to say hello. The wagging tail and smiling face, along with his demand for attention pushed Mr. Holmes backward toward the

door.

"Doc, send me a bill for the damages. I'm really sorry I caused you so much trouble today, but you were my lifesaver. I must get him to the car before he hurts me. Thanks again for taking care of Duke."

"Okay, Mr. Holmes. I'll see you later."

It was a great relief knowing Mr. Mike Holmes was a caring person.

I normally get home to a very quiet house, especially when it is one o'clock in the morning, but not this morning. Babs was awake and waiting to find out what had happened.

"Dear, it is a long story, but we got Duke back to his owner and they are on their way back to his Kentucky home. The most interesting part of the evening was how the dog actually 'pulled off' his break out. He had to lift the heavy gate by grabbing the wire with his front teeth and lifting it off its' pin-type hinges. He had three doors to open before he got to June's desk. Then he had to jump over June's desk to get to the waiting room, pawing the books and papers into the floor as he went through the receptionist's window. He probably jumped against the outside window and broke it for his break out."

"The opening of the doors is what amazes me. It took some skill, if you can use that term when referring to a dog. His jaw teeth indented the round brass doorknobs of each of the doors he opened. But just think, he had to twist the knob while pulling on two of the doors and he had to twist and push on the other door."

"Carl, that is very interesting and it seems you now have everything under control. There are some doughnuts in the kitchen, if you want to nibble on something, and coffee in the pot. But don't forget to turn the coffee pot off before you fall asleep in your chair. I am very tired, and I'm going to bed before it's time to get the kids up for school."





## YOU SAVED MY LIFE

"Doc, it's time for you to see windy Eileen and her new kitten. They are in exam room three."

"Okay, Mabel, I'll be there in a minute. You can go back to your receptionist's desk without telling me Eileen's new joke. I know I'll hear her joke and much more before I get the kitten checked. She likes to tell me all of the current and even the non-current gossip." I slowly entered the room.

"Hi, Eileen, I see you have a new kitten. Where did you get her? How long have you had her? Has she had any worm medicines or any vaccinations.....and how have you been?"

"I've been pretty good, Doc. I got this cute little kitten from one of my neighbors. No, she hasn't been wormed or had any of her vaccinations. I brought her to you for all that good stuff. Did I get all of your questions answered?"

"I think so. I'll get her checked out, vaccinated, and wormed if she isn't too ornery."

"She will slap you with those front claws."

"I'll watch the feet, and thanks for the warning."

"I have a joke for you."

I checked the kitten as Eileen dragged through her rotten joke. The joke wasn't funny, but I laughed at the proper time. I laughed every time she laughed.

"Everything looks good, I can get her vaccinated and wormed today."

"Doc, what have you been doing in your spare time since you cut back on your office hours?"

"Eileen, you make it sound like I've quit practicing. I still put in my forty to fifty hours per week, but I have been trying to avoid those seventy hour work weeks of long ago. We have three veterinarians here to take some of the load off this veterinarian's back. Anyway, those spare hours, as you so freely address them, have given me time to write."

"What are you writing about?"

I am writing a book of short stories about my experiences as a veterinarian. I thought you might have heard some of the stories I've told people I am writing."

"I haven't heard a word. Are you putting me into your book? I'll bet there aren't many veterinarians who have saved a pet owner's life like you saved mine."

"I haven't written anything about you, but then again, I don't remember saving your life. What in the world are you talking about? How did I happen along and save your life?"

She wasn't too happy with me as she tore into me for being so casual about her life.

"You're joking. You must remember saving my life."

I was listening to every word by now, but I couldn't remember saving her life. I remember giving CPR to some man, but he died.

"You remember saving my life, don't you?"

"No, Eileen, I don't have the slightest idea about what you are asking or telling me. I am sorry, but I don't remember."

She was getting more hostile and I was getting defensive.

"Come on, Doc, you surely remember me getting mad when you diagnosed the same problem in my dog and me."

"I don't remember! You must have me mixed up with someone else. I don't make diagnoses on humans. I learned a long time ago to keep my medical thoughts restricted to animals. Human medicine is a different cup of tea. The only time I have anything to say in the human medicine field is when an animal has a disease which is shared by man and animal, like rabies."

"You really don't remember, do you?"

"Nope, I don't have the foggiest idea what you are talking about. I am starting to believe you are serious and this isn't one of your jokes. I am sorry I don't remember saving your life, but I am glad I did whatever I did."

"Thank you, Doc. I am glad you did, too. It will be nine years ago this coming July that I had my surgery. I had Fluffy in here in May for her annual check up and vaccinations. You felt her belly and told me she had a hernia and a mass in her belly. You thought it might be a female related cancer, probably ovarian."

"Eileen, I'll have Mabel get Fluff's old records out after this morning's rush is over because my recall isn't working. Will you tell me, without getting mad, what I did nine years ago for Fluff and you? Maybe, just maybe, I'll remember if you tell me."

"Doc, you jumped all over me for not having Fluffy spayed years ago, is what you did. You told me it was my fault and I could have prevented this type of serious surgery which Fluffy needed. You made me mad and I walked out on you."

"I thought I did the surgery on Fluffy, but how could I do surgery if you stormed out of here mad?"

"I was so mad I stormed out of here and slammed the door on my way out. I loved Fluffy and you were telling me I was mistreating my dog."

"I hope you have enough time to tell me all of this story. I can't remember any of these things you are telling me and what did Fluffy's condition have to do with me saving your life?"

"Doc, I've got the time, if you think the whole thing will come back to you."

"Keep going, I'll interrupt if you trigger my brain into remembering."

"I was still mad when I got home. I had my cup of 'cooling off' coffee. I cooled off. I realized then I had made a big fool of myself and hadn't gotten a thing done for my dog. I called and made a surgery appointment. You did the surgery the very next

day. You did the ovariohysterectomy, removed the tumor, and corrected the hernia. You kept Fluff for three days after surgery. She lived to the ripe old age of fifteen before I lost her."

"How did Fluffy's surgery have anything to do with saving your life? You haven't mentioned yourself in this story. You have to be pulling my leg and I am waiting to be hit with the punchline."

"Doc, this is no joke! I thought you might remember at least a little something by now. Don't you remember when you were sending Fluffy home and had both of us in an examination room? You told me about the surgery and what I had to do at home to care for Fluffy."

"That is what we do with all pet owners who are taking their pets home after major surgery. We make sure they understand the directions for the home care and how very important it is. Was there something unusual that happened which should make me remember?"

"You were feeling my belly. Is that unusual enough to make you remember? I sure do!"

"No! I didn't feel your belly! I have never laid a hand on you, or any other client, let alone a female client's belly. I didn't touch you!"

"You don't remember, do you? You told me I had the same problem as Fluffy's. You made me mad when you told me I was mistreating my dog, and there you were telling me I was mistreating myself. You made me mad again. I stormed out of your office slamming the door behind me. You probably don't remember that either, do you?"

"No, Eileen, I don't remember and I am not going to remember because I never touched you or told you that you had a female tumor or any of the stuff you are giving me credit. This is something I don't joke about. Now, back off and let me get back to work."

I was getting a little upset with Eileen's story telling but she pushed forward.

"Doctor Baker, I went through the same kind of cooling off period as I did with Fluff. This time I called my own doctor and made an appointment. Doctor Baker, my doctor tentatively diagnosed an ovarian tumor and a hernia. I told him I was quite sure of what he was going to find because the condition had been diagnosed before. He wanted to know who the first doctor was and if surgery had been recommended."

"Eileen, I didn't lay a hand on you."

"I told him my veterinarian had made the original diagnosis. Doc, you can keep telling yourself you didn't feel my belly and find a tumor, but I remember it quite well. You are the one who got me to call my doctor for an appointment and examination. I wouldn't have gone if it hadn't been for you. You saved my life."

"I don't remember touching your belly. I didn't touch your belly!"

"Doc, it really is true, even if you have forgotten. I am not going to show you my scars or let you feel my belly again, but they removed a small grapefruit-size tumor and did a complete ovariohysterectomy. The surgeon told me the ovaries were as big as his fist and ready to rupture, and the uterus was twice the normal size. He also said if I had waited much longer, he might not have been able to do the surgery. So, you saved my life."

"I don't remember....not even one little part of your story."

"Go ahead and put it in your book because it is true."

I told Babs about the lifesaving thing I had done all those years ago and I couldn't remember any of the stuff Eileen had told me. I also told her about getting Fluff's old records out and found that nine years ago I had done the surgery Eileen had said I had done. Babs couldn't believe I would touch a client. I appreciated the trust she had in her husband. She ended the conversation with, "Carl, you know June worked for you all those years ago and she would have stopped you from feeling a client's belly. She would

have called me if any foolishness like that was going on in the office."

I did take care of Fluff, but not Eileen.





## RABIES

"Doc, there is a Doctor Robert something or another on the phone from the state health department and he must talk to you. I'm sorry but I didn't get his last name."

"Hello, this is Doctor Baker, my secretary said you had to talk to me personally."

"Are you Doctor Carl T. Baker of Chesapeake Ohio 45619?"

"Yes, and to whom am I speaking, and why?"

"Carl, this is Doctor Robert Lynd, of the Ohio Department of Health. You might remember me from my visit with you a few years back."

"Hi, Robert, I do remember you. What's the problem?"

"I'm calling about the dog's head you sent to our lab for rabies testing, it's positive."

"Oh, bull----, here I go again with another series of rabies shots."

"Didn't you have the rabies vaccinations when you were in school?"

"Yes, I had the vaccination in my junior year, my senior year, the year after I graduated, and the blankety-blank rabies shots the last two times I was exposed to rabid dogs."

"Well, what are you worried about? You should be protected. Do you have any measurable immunity? What about your titer?"

"I have a titer against rabies, but you know darn well the

titer level doesn't mean I am immune. You know this titer stuff hasn't been challenged in humans and I don't plan on being a guinea pig for the sake of science. I'll take another series of rabies shots. I don't feel like dying of rabies just to be a statistic for science."

"Carl, sorry I hit a sensitive spot, but the health department needs more information about the people who were exposed to the rabid dog."

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to jump your frame, but I hate the thought of going through those shots again."

"That's okay. I understand how you feel. I've been down the road of taking rabies shots across my belly and it was no fun with the old type rabies shots. The new stuff is supposed to be better and there are supposed to be fewer shots to take. Your doctor will tell you about the new anti-rabies shots. Now, tell me how many of your staff were exposed to the rabid Boxer."

"None, thank God! But, there were five or six in the owner's family who were exposed."

"Your Lawrence County Health Department will take care of them, but I get to take care of the veterinarians and their staff who might have been exposed to rabies. We are trying to keep all of our records up to date, especially on those people who have had rabies inoculations. Sorry, but we want you as a statistic in our efforts to advance the rabies prevention program. I would appreciate all the information you can remember about this rabid dog."

"Oh, my land of mercy! How well I remember being called out on that Sunday night. The caller said his dog was choking on a rib bone. I went through the routine telephone question and answer bit, hoping to make a diagnosis and avoid going out on some frivolous Sunday night 'emergency'. The caller went on to tell me the family was having a cookout and one of the kids (kids always get the blame) must have given the dog a rib bone. The dog was now choking. By the time I got around to saying you had better bring your dog into the clinic for me to check, the caller had

had told me five people had their hands down the Boxer's throat. We agreed to meet at the clinic in fifteen minutes. The fifteen minute wait turned into thirty-five minutes of waiting with no signs of the people or even a call to let me know they would be late. I get so peeved when people don't show up after calling me out for their emergency. I was about to leave when a slew of people came bouncing into my waiting room with a big Boxer. No one seemed to have a care in the world. They weren't the slightest bit apologetic for being so late, they just smiled. The Boxer even had a smile on his face; he wasn't choking but something seemed to be wrong with him. I didn't pick up anything with my first glance, but cautious hesitation took hold of my actions and told me to be extra careful of this one. I looked at the Boxer from a safe distance of six feet. Maybe, just maybe, I would be able to pick up the cause for my gut feeling about the Boxer's general appearance."

"Then, I noticed the Boxer's jaw. It was hanging down about an inch. His tongue was working but he wouldn't or couldn't close his mouth. I thought about rabies, but then again, he is acting so normal except for his jaw hanging down. The hanging jaw made me think to protect myself against rabies. He might have a bone jammed between his teeth, but he is not pawing his mouth as dogs do when trying to dislodge something wedged between their teeth. I must look into his mouth."

"Robert, the rabid animals I've seen have never looked the same as the description of rabies in the school text books. Experience is a great teacher. It told me to put on a pair of gloves, and to be more safe, put a pair of gloves over the first pair. I double-gloved my hands. My deadly fear of rabies made me do something correct. Sorry, Robert, but I got away from your question. No one on my staff got within ten feet of the Boxer. I'll give you some details if you or the health department want them."

"Carl, I need the best history you can give me to track any human exposure to this rabid dog. Can you tell me where the dog could have gotten the rabies? How many people could have been

exposed to this dog in the last two weeks? What other animals might have been exposed to the rabies source animal and this Boxer? Basically, what was the source and possible exposures?"

"Oh, Robert! You're asking a heckuva lot. There has to be at least five or six people from the same family involved. I can't hunt these people down for you. I have no legal authority to do any investigative work. That is your job, along with the local health department."

"Carl, go over what you can and I'll track it down, if possible."

"Robert, these people told me their dog had never been out of its pen, except on a leash. The only other animal it ever got close to was its mother. I didn't touch the dog with bare hands. The dog didn't show any of the classical symptoms of rabies. I put the dog in a locked area on Sunday night and it was dead on Monday morning. I wouldn't allow any of my employees around when I did the post mortem. Oh, the owners said its mother died about two months ago."

"Carl, how did the mother die?"

"They said she didn't eat one day and the next morning she was dead, stretched out in her lot, stiff. The mother was a Coonhound, a very good hound. The owners talked about how she would tangle with raccoons without a bit of good sense."

"Carl, I thought you said the dog was a Boxer, now you tell me its' mother was a Coonhound."

"Its' mother was a Coonhound and its' father was a 'traveling man'. The dog with rabies looked more Boxer than anything else, so that makes it a Boxer."

"I don't like what you are telling me, Carl. Lawrence County might be in for a rabies epidemic in the raccoons."

"Oh, hell, Robert. Don't even think quarantine, and I know it is going through your head. I don't doubt the mother got the rabies from a raccoon and passed it on to her pup, but wouldn't we have had a rabies epidemic by now if this was anything more than

an isolated case?"

"Robert, you are in the health department in Columbus and I am a practicing veterinarian in rural Lawrence County, Ohio. I remind you of this because I don't want the county quarantined, or at this point see reason for it. I have contact with more people than you do in this county. The game warden is a personal friend and I know the people at Natural Resources and neither have said one word to me about rabies. You can believe me if there was a problem with the wildlife of Lawrence County I would have known. I don't mean to lecture you but I know the problems of being quarantined. We don't need to be quarantined."

"Carl! I hear what you are saying but is there anything good about this dog's rabies since human beings have been exposed?"

"Well, maybe there is one good thing the owners of the Boxer did tell me. They didn't touch the dead mother dog. There has to be someone 'upstairs' looking after them. It may sound crazy but they used the farm tractor equipped with a front-end loader to pick her up and bury her. They never laid a hand on her."

"Carl, the mother dog must have been the source of the boxer's rabies, although we must keep our minds open."

"Yes, but don't forget the family was having a family cookout and many family members had their hands on the Boxer. I can't tell you how many people tried to dislodge the so-called bone caught in the throat.....a bunch of people, not raccoons or coonhounds or boxers, but people. You know your job and I can't help you much."

"Carl, you know very well I can't do much from Columbus. Your health department will need to do all the leg work. Talk to your doctor about taking the rabies shots and all that good stuff. Remember, the State of Ohio will end up paying the doctor and covering the cost of the vaccines. Thanks a lot for all of your help. If I get down your way, I'll drink a cup of your strong coffee."

"Thanks for notifying me of the test results. I'll get started

on the nasty shots as soon as possible."

I contacted the U.S. Disease Control Center in Atlanta to see if there were any changes in the status of a titer meaning immunity. They informed me the blood test I had run last year, showed my titer was staying high and I probably didn't need to take anymore rabies shots. My doctor said to take two shots at one week intervals, just to make sure I had as much protection as my body could produce.

"Doc, Doctor Lynd from the Ohio Department of Health wants you on line two.

"Hi, Robert, what's the occasion? Two calls within a week, there must be trouble."

"Carl, your local health department just phoned me about the owner of the rabid Boxer dog. I don't know what is going on in the hills of southern Ohio, but your health department is worried about the people who owned the Boxer dog. The family, each and every one of them, has refused to submit to the free rabies shots. They have the right to refuse, but tell me why they would refuse the free lifesaving procedure. I am hoping you might know them and be able to convince them the shots are needed to save their lives."

"Robert, I don't know these people. The only time they were in my office was with the Boxer, but I'll give them a call and see why they are refusing treatment. I don't want a bunch of rabid people running around Lawrence County. Is there anything else I can do?"

"Carl, these people must be idiots to gamble with their lives, especially after such an obvious exposure to rabies. Carl, please call them and tell them about rabies. They will listen to a hometown veterinarian much quicker than some guy from Columbus. Let me know what you accomplish, please."

"I'll let you know what they tell me. See you, Robert."

I didn't have an inkling of how these people might react. I had to call and talk to them. I didn't want to go to their funerals.

Maybe that is what I should tell them -- if they died I would feel obligated to go to their funerals. I guess I had better call and start talking. I hate to call people I don't know.

"Hello, this is Doctor Baker, the veterinarian who saw your dog. The dog you thought had a bone stuck in it's throat, and it died of rabies. I hope you are one of those people who were in my clinic that Sunday night."

"Yes, sir, I was there and I remember. Thank you again for coming in on Sunday night. Why are you calling?"

"Ma'am, I am sorry your dog died but I am calling about you now. The state health department called and told me that all of your family has refused to take the rabies shots. I don't know why you would refuse the treatments, so I am sticking my nose into your business. I thought it might be religious beliefs, or cost, or fear of the shots, or some other reason, but I wanted to know why. If you feel I am butting into your private business and you want me to butt out, tell me."

"Doc, it is very nice of you to call us. We didn't take the shots because we didn't think we needed them."

"Ma'am, I don't know if you need the shots but the odds are against you. All of you can get rabies and die. I'm not saying this lightly, you are in danger of catching rabies. I've seen rabies in dogs and cows, along with seeing movies of humans with rabies and there isn't any difference in the way animals or humans act when diseased. We end up dead."

"Isn't there a treatment?"

"No, ma'am, only prevention. The medical world has produced rabies vaccine for animals and man, but vaccinations only prevent the disease, not treat it. The frequency of the disease has been reduced significantly, but rabies is still out there killing humans as well as animals. I think you should reconsider your decision and take the preventative shots."

"I appreciate you calling and telling me about rabies, but I'm not sure what the family will do."

"Ma'am, I started the shots a couple of days ago and they hurt, but I'll make it through them."

"Doctor, are you really taking the shots?"

"Yes, ma'am. I am taking those darn painful shots. I don't want to die from rabies!"

"I watched you put on two pairs of gloves before you even touched our dog. If you are taking the shots after being so careful, then we will start the shots tomorrow."

Three weeks later I received another call from Doctor Lynd.

"Hi, Carl, thought it was about time I got back with you and thanked you for preventing some human deaths from rabies. I don't know how you talked all those people into taking the rabies shots, but all of those exposed took the shots without any problems."

"I'm glad everything went so well."

"Carl, how did you talk them into taking the series of rabies shots? No one else could even get them to listen to good medical advice."

"Robert, it wasn't what I said, but what I did the night they brought the dog into the clinic. They had watched me much closer than I thought. My wearing two pairs of rubber gloves was what caught their eye and I didn't even know it. The wearing of the gloves and then telling them I was taking the series of rabies shots was what convinced them."

"Carl, thank you again for doing the correct thing at the correct time."





## I DON'T TREAT BIRDS

"Lady, I can't help you! I don't treat birds!"

"You are a veterinarian, so you should treat my bird."

"Yes, ma'am, I am a veterinarian but I don't treat birds, or horses, or cows, or hamsters, or lions, or many other species of animals."

The phone was slammed down in my ear. That lady was very unhappy with me. Oh, I've treated birds in the past but I didn't like it. I felt uncomfortable when doctoring birds and started questioning my medical ability, so I quit.

I wasn't doing much of anything that evening when the lady called about her sick bird. She spoiled my idle evening by making me feel guilty and cruel. I am a veterinarian and probably could have done something, but there are other veterinarians out there in this world who treat birds. I wonder why people think all veterinarians treat every species of animal. We don't! I couldn't shake the guilt the lady had impregnated in me. I am a veterinarian and should be able to help her bird. Why do I dislike birds and refuse to treat them? The idle time of the evening forced me into some soul searching for reasons, or at least the needed excuses, to cleanse myself of the guilt of not treating a sick animal.

I sort of talked to myself, or at least my memory bank had a small discussion with my guilt feelings. Remember the lady who brought the big white duck into the office a few years ago? Memory, how could I forget that duck! I'll be darned, I have forgotten what I did for the duck but I remember what that duck did to the office!

I remember the lady standing in the exam room explaining why she was holding the duck by the neck with her left hand and using her right arm to tuck the duck's wings and body up under her right armpit while restraining the duck's legs and feet with her right hand. Oh, the duck was making all kinds of duck noises as it tried to free itself from the lady's vise grip.

"Doc, this duck would be all over your office if I didn't hold it this way. I'm not hurting her although the noises she is making sounds like I am killing her. Honest, I'm not."

I started to ask the lady why she had brought the duck in when I noticed the duck having a very unusual loose bowel movement, even for a duck.

"Watch out, lady, your duck is having a BM on your britches!"

That was the wrong choice of words.

"Where, Doc?", she asked as she was trying to look over the duck's back to see where the duck had messed on her. She was turning in a circle trying to see what the duck had done, but all she was doing was squeezing the duck as she pivoted. I found out the details later, but was seeing first hand the reason she had brought that duck to a veterinarian, the duck had a bad case of diarrhea. She was now squeezing and pivoting and spraying the exam room as she tried to see what the duck was doing to her britches. It reminded me of a machine gun spraying bullets. What a mess we had by the time I got her and that duck out the side door.

The guilty feeling questioned, "Is that reason enough to dislike treating birds?" Carl, you didn't like birds long before old machine gun butt duck was in your office. You had better try a little harder, dig a little deeper into your memory bank for the real reason.

Okay guilt feeling, the memory will take you back as far as it can. I can't remember much of anything prior to St. John, Indiana. I was only eight years old, just a little kid in a new place.

Okay memory, if that is as far back as you can go, what

happened in St. John that might contribute to your disliking birds?

I don't remember why Dad dragged our family from a happy city life to a farm, but he did. To this little kid a fifteen acre farm was a scary, new world of unexplored, unfriendly territory occupied by animals which made funny noises when they were eating. Our city dog, Skeeter, didn't know what to think about Dad's pigs either, and he barked at them when Dad wasn't around to holler 'shut up' at him. The little farm was Dad's retreat from the pressures of being the superintendent of a tin mill which was gearing up for the mass production needed for the war in Europe and the upcoming World War II.

The big two story barn with a pigeon loft and the long, one story chicken house attached for Mom's chickens, occupied a great deal of this little boy's spare time. I wasn't allowed to go too far from the farmhouse, so the backyard and barn was my playground.

The pigeons were different from city birds. They wouldn't fly away when I chased them. Mom didn't like the dirty, noisy pigeons either, so Dad closed down the pigeon loft. I was glad Dad got rid of the pigeons.

Well, guilt feeling, the pigeons were my first reason for disliking birds but I also blame Mom's chickens for some of the dislike. Mom's chickens caused me to lay unconscious in a hospital for a few days. I blame the chickens, but they didn't do anything directly. This little kid was playing in the second floor of the big barn when he fell through the trap door we used to toss straw through for chicken bedding. If Mom hadn't had the chickens, there wouldn't have been a working trap door for me to fall through. I hit my head and ended up in the hospital, unconscious. The little kid blames the chickens. It is another reason for disliking birds.

"Hey, Guilt Feelings, what about those cawing crows? Now, there is a smart bird who brags about being superior to man."

"What are you talking about, Memory?"

"Those crows, those darn crows with their lookouts and

spies which know more about a farmer planting corn than the farmer. The crow isn't interested in the farmer getting the ground ready for planting, but he is waiting to call in all of his relatives as the seed corn goes into the ground. The relatives come from miles around to attack the newly planted field of corn. The farmer must do combat with this highly organized group of birds. This little boy was one of the crow chaser combatants and took the brunt of the crows' victory caws after they had eaten their fill of the seed corn."

It's not fun to be laughed at by a bunch of birds.

Hey, Guilty Feeling, don't you think that is a reason to dislike birds?

Memory, those are little boy reasons, where are the big boy reasons?

Guilt, you have me on a roll now. I think I have you pushed back into the subconscious.

I'll start with the little boy getting to be a big boy in responsibility and carrying it through to a big boy in size and age. Dad moved the family back to Sabraton, West Virginia to live on my recently deceased Granddad Kennedy's farm. The second World War had started and a little boy doesn't understand war needs or the importance of supplying food from a real farm. The Bakers became a real farm family and I acquired new jobs as a member of that farm family. I was assigned jobs that little boys can do. One of those jobs was helping my older brothers clean out the chicken house. We had enough chickens to sell eggs and those chickens made very sizeable messes to clean up. I believe cleaning up after the chickens created a dislike of them.

Let's keep going a little further, I was growing older and was no longer a little city boy. I was a farm boy. I joined the 4-H Club and high school agriculture class came along. I needed a farm project where I could use the old chicken house. I raised two hundred fryer chickens. The raising was easy, but the cleaning, dressing, and then selling them was the tough part of the project.

The project made me some money and also contributed to my grade in agriculture class, but I disliked chickens a little more.

The years passed and a few more incidents added to my list of reasons. I made it through the different ways the army cooks could fix chicken, but haven't eaten much chicken since those days.

I'm up to my college days, enrolled in pre-veterinary medicine at West Virginia University. I had to have good grades to be considered for medical school and a chicken course was one of those required courses. Like it or not I had to take the chicken course and I had to make a good grade. I was doing great, but on a pick-a-winner test the instructor tossed in a few trick questions I missed. I remember the know-it-all professor reviewing the test. I felt he was rubbing my nose into my missed answers. I lost my temper, but was lucky Tank sat behind me. Tank and I first met during the Korean War and then again at West Virginia University. We were both enrolled in Pre-Vet-Med. I was coming up out of my seat with intentions of doing bodily harm to that professor. A big hand came down on my shoulder and jammed me into my seat.

"Carl, cool it. You'll get your butt kicked out of school if you do what your temper is demanding. Sit there and eat his words. You have your A, so eat your principles and cool your temper."

Hey, guilt, the old memory is now reminding you about survival in this cruel world. I ate my principles and cooled my temper and took the A, but my dislike of birds was intensified.

Memory, you are building a strong case against feeling guilty about treating birds, but how did you get through the medical courses in veterinary school?

Guilty Feeling, I remember the bird medicine courses which are taught in veterinary school. I didn't like them, but I survived, somehow.

Okay, Memory, what did you do after you had your degree, when you were a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine?

I decided my degree didn't mean I had to treat birds, so I

don't treat birds. I haven't really felt guilty about not treating birds until that lady laid into me!

The series of my lifetime happenings I've brought back by taxing my memory has put any guilty feelings away forever, but I've had other experiences with bird owners demanding veterinary service. I must tell about one bird owner in need of more than a veterinarian.

It was an extra warm summer day when the air conditioner decided to put out very little cool air. We had to get the fans working to keep the clinic tolerable while we waited for the repairman. I had a cat in surgery with a very nasty leg fracture. It had to be fixed, regardless of our personal discomfort. The fracture would require stainless steel pins and wires to get it back in the correct position for healing. Only a surgeon who has worked on this kind of fracture knows about the times when a frustration break must be taken or go nuts. I was in a frustration break when Liza put her head into the surgery room and asked, "Doc, may I talk to you now?"

"What is it you want?" She knew when she opened the door there would be a mean tempered doctor on the other side, but she also knew her job and she had to inform me of current important goings on.

"Doc, one of your buddies wants you on the phone. He says it's an emergency."

"Liza, you know I can't come to the phone and what makes you think it is one of my buddies?"

"He must be your buddy, he asked for Carl."

"Liza, it is either one of my brothers or a salesman of some kind trying to get me to the phone. Find out if it is a brother. If it's not my brother find out what the emergency is."

Liza was back to the surgery door before I started back on my problem surgery. She informed me it wasn't one of my brothers or a salesman, but a man who owns a five hundred dollar South

American Blue Parrot.

"Liza, I hope you informed him I don't treat birds!"

"Doc, he doesn't want you to doctor his parrot. He wants you to go to Huntington and help him get his parrot out of a tree. He said the parrot was out of his cage flying around in the house and someone left the screen door open and he flew out to the top of a big tree. The bird is just setting there now, afraid to fly down."

"Oh, Liza, tell him to call the fire department. They have a ladder truck."

"Doc, I told him that and he said the fire department couldn't come out for a parrot in a tree and he should call his veterinarian. The yellow pages has your name first, that's where he got your first name and telephone number."

"I hope you handled the problem because I am not climbing a tree for any kind of bird!"

I continued with my surgery and was just about finished when Liza was at the surgery door again.

"Doc, don't get mad at me but your buddy is back on the phone. This time he wants you to doctor his bird."

"He's not my buddy! What happened? Did his parrot fall out of the tree and hurt itself? What is it with this guy? Tell him I don't treat birds!"

"Doc, I told him that on the first call and I told him that on the second call, but he insists I ask you again with a big please."

"What happened to his parrot that it needs doctoring? Just a few minutes ago it was in the top of a tree."

"Doc, he told me he shot it out of the tree and now he wants you to treat his bird for gunshot wounds!"

"Liza, NO! NO! NO! I don't treat birds!"



## WHAT DO I DO - OR SAY - NOW

It doesn't matter where I've practiced veterinary medicine, and I've practiced in Morgantown, West Virginia, Huntington, West Virginia, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Chesapeake, Ohio, the same type of episodes continually repeat themselves. I've found myself coming out of an examination room talking to myself and making unusual body gestures. I don't know if my arms extended in front of me with the palms toward the ceiling and the shrugging of my shoulders is to relieve some of the client pressure I had just endured or if I'm informing the staff I had a real winner in the exam room.

The body gestures along with a weird facial expression and my mumbling, "I'm only a veterinarian....I'm only a veterinarian.", backs off the staff until I have regained some composure. It never fails, I always remember the dean of the veterinary school telling my freshman class about the two percent of the people causing ninety-eight percent of our problems. No truer words have ever been spoken. The two percent is always there and must be faced.

The minute or so it takes to regain one's composure after facing one of those in the 'two percent' group seems like an hour. I've learned to acclimate myself to the situation by remembering the patient isn't the problem, but it's the patient's owner. At times it is tough to mentally void out the owner and care for the patient but that is what the dean was telling us we had to do.

Come, take a walk with me through a few five minute epi-

sodes in my career which seem to push the good stuff from my memory. I can hear my Mother, bless her soul, telling me, "Don't tell stories out of school." Or, "Don't wash your laundry in public." But this is a side of being a veterinarian few people see and this is wash day.

### **DR. BOB'S FACE**

Dr. Bob came out of an exam room squirting blood from the side of his face and hollering at me, "I'm not going back into that room with those crazy women and that stupid Chow pup!"

"Bob, you are bleeding all over the place, get to the bathroom and get your bleeding stopped. Do you need help?"

"No, I don't need any help! You get to go back into the exam room because I'm not!"

I'm sure the women in the exam room heard Dr. Bob calling them crazy through the closed exam room door, but I had to face them, regardless. As I entered the exam room and before I could open my mouth I heard, "I want my pup's records! I'm not coming back to this place! That doctor hit my puppy when all this little puppy was doing was giving him a love pinch on the side of his face."

"Ma'am, Doctor Bob is trying to stop the bleeding from where your pup bit him and that is not a love pinch in any language. Your pup's records have not been written up and won't be until Doctor Bob gets his bleeding stopped. Have your new veterinarian give us a call and we will send him a copy of our records."

The two ladies were gone by the time Bob got the bleeding stopped and told me what happened.

"Doc, I had finished vaccinating the puppy and had given

him some roundworm medicine. I was telling the women to expect some soreness from the injections and maybe a little fever. I was petting the pup while talking to them when fifteen pounds of puppy latched on to the side of my face. I had to knock him loose. He landed in their laps. They were cussing at me as I left the exam room."

"You have four or five puncture wounds in your face, take care of them. You don't have to worry about the women, they promised me they would never come back. Do you want to see a real doctor about your face?"

"No! And don't try to be funny, it hurts."

### THE SICK PUP

How about the lady with the sick pup?

"Okay, Ma'am, let's get your puppy unwrapped and out of that towel. I need to take its temperature and get a look at him."

The young lady had told Mary, the receptionist, she had a very sick, vomiting, twelve week old puppy that needed to be doctored. She started to unwrap her puppy as I turned from the exam table to get the thermometer.

When I turned back around the lady had the puppy facing me with its mouth pried open, waiting for me to put the thermometer under its tongue.

"Ma'am, turn the puppy around, I need the other end to take its temperature."

"Doctor, what good is taking its temperature from that end? It's vomiting from this end!"

What do I do -- or say -- now?

I bit my lip to avoid saying something I would regret and took a rectal temperature.

## **ELEPHANT GESTATION**

I told Doctor Bob the story about the thermometer and he came back with one of his encounters with the two percent.

"Carl, the lady didn't know any better and my unusual story makes yours take a backseat."

"I'm glad someone other than myself recalls the crazy happenings. What happened to you, Doctor?"

"It was three o'clock in the morning when I got the call and was questioned, 'Doctor, what is the gestation period of an elephant?'. I couldn't believe what I was hearing."

"What did you say?"

"Carl, I asked why they had called to ask me what the gestation period of an elephant is at three o'clock in the morning. I was wide awake and quite hostile in seconds, to say the least. I unleashed my temper and let it fly. "Why are you idiots calling at this time of night? I was sound asleep after a long, hard day and your emergency call is to find out the gestation period of an elephant. If you were breeding elephants you should know a little about what you are doing, and if you're not breeding elephants you shouldn't be calling a veterinarian!"

"What did they say?"

"Those idiots hung up on me with this as their parting remark, 'Doctor, all you had to say was you didn't know!'. I don't know what bothered me most, their calling or my having to go look up the gestation period of the elephant. I had to check my memory, so I could forget...again."

## **THE VERY SICK BEAGLE**

Another episode created by two of those people in the two

percent group started in the pharmacy on a very busy summer Monday morning.

A very upset receptionist came in screaming at me.

"Mary, get off of your panic button, take a deep breath, and tell me what is wrong!"

"Doc, there is a very sick dog in the waiting room. I think she is about dead. I haven't started a record and those boys haven't been here before. There is a bunch of people in the waiting room and all of them are pushing me to get the dog looked after. What do I do?"

"Mary, get the dog into an empty exam room and I will check her. You can get the records made out later. Go! Go!"

As I entered the exam room I saw a very pregnant looking beagle stretched out on the exam table and she looked dead. I couldn't see her breathing or her heart beating. I gently slid my hand under her nose and raised her head. I wanted to see her gums and eyes. Her entire body came up off the table as I lifted her nose. She was stiff.

"Fellows, your dog is dead! Rigor mortis has set in, your dog has been dead for at least an hour."

"Doc, Mom called us last night and told us she thought our dog was dying but we didn't get to her pen until this morning. We thought she was dead."

"Couldn't you see she was dead?" I didn't wait for the obvious answer. Surely these young men knew their dog was dead....stiff dead. I guess they wanted to know why their dog died.

"Fellows, she was trying to deliver her pups last night. She had some kind of delivery problem and couldn't push the pups out. Look and you can see a dead pup half in and half out. She died in labor! Now, why did you bring this dead dog to me?"

"Doc, we want you to save the puppies."

I thought, Oh, Lord, why did you put this little beagle in the hands of these inept people?

What do I do -- or say -- now?

"The pups died when their mother died! Take her home and bury her."

It is sad that neglect killed this mother and her pups, but it was sick humor watching this guy carry his dead beagle out of the exam room. He had a big towel wrapped around her midsection with the ends of the towel rolled into a handle in the middle of her back. He picked her up like a suitcase, with her stiffened neck and head sticking out of the front end of the towel, her stiffened legs were pointing toward the floor, and her rigid tail was pointing out of the back end of the towel. It looked like a pointer dog on stance.

I could only guide them out the side door.

### **THE PREACHER'S EMERGENCY**

Then again...we have emergency calls at home.

The 7:30 AM, Sunday morning emergency call didn't really sound like an emergency, but the owner insisted his dog had to be seen within the next half hour. I obliged, thinking no one really pays attention to little things at seven thirty on a Sunday morning unless it is some emergency. The dog must be sick I reasoned, and I didn't take time to shave. I hurried to the office to see the sick dog. The owner and the dog were waiting for me in the hospital's parking lot.

"Hi, your dog seems to be bouncing around the parking lot like a normal healthy pup."

"Doc, there is something wrong and I don't know what it is. Butch ate some of the cat's food this morning and started vomiting. The cat didn't get sick when it ate."

"What did he do after vomiting?"

"Oh, he acted pretty good after he quit vomiting but I didn't have time to wait around to see what he was going to do next. I am a preacher and I have a sermon to preach at ten. Butch seemed too sick to leave at home while I was at church, so I called you."

"I'll keep him, go preach your sermon."

That was all I could do. I felt sure the catfood was the cause of the vomiting. The sermon was the emergency that needed a veterinarian's help. What else could I do -- or say -- now?

The normal, bouncing dog went home after church.

### DOES IT HURT

What about the woman who questioned my religion in a roundabout way?

"Yes, ma'am, I can meet you at the office in twenty minutes. It sounds like you have an emergency. We will talk more about what happened at the office."

"Doc, I think my neighbor poisoned my dog."

"Ma'am, quit talking and get your dog to the office!"

"Okay..okay."

I was waiting for the lady as she pulled into the parking lot screaming and crying that her dog was dead. I confirmed her diagnosis, the dog was dead. The foul language toward her neighbor started flowing. I listened to some but stopped her when she started talking 'lawsuit'. She had me as an expert witness when she sued her neighbor.

"Whoa there, just a minute, Ma'am. I didn't say anything more than your dog is dead. I didn't say anything about your dog being poisoned. I'll do a post mortem examination if you want."

I was stumped for an answer when she asked, "Will it hurt?"

"Ma'am, your dog is dead and I can't tell you about the 'Hereafter'."

I wondered where my preacher friend was when I needed him.

"Doctor, will you guarantee that my dog will feel no pain with your post mortem?"

What do I do - or say - now?

"No, ma'am, I've never been dead so I can't guarantee anything after death."

She took her dog home for burial.

## **OH, THAT PHONE!**

And here is another reason why I hate the telephone.

"Carl, the phone call is for you. It's a lady with two sick cats.", is how Babs woke me from my pre-going-to-bed nap.

"Hello, this is Doctor Baker. How may I help you?"

"My cats have been sick for two days with diarrhea and vomiting."

"Ma'am, I don't recognize your voice. Who am I talking to?"

"Doctor, I've never been to your office. You don't know me. Now, let me tell you about my cats. They were acting and eating okay then they got the diarrhea's and stopped eating. The vomiting started next and now they are acting very sick. What do they have and what medicine do I give them?"

"Ma'am, from what you have told me, your cats are sick. Can you bring them to my office?"

"Doctor, I don't want you to see my cats just tell me what is wrong with them and what medicine to give!"

"Ma'am, I've never seen your cats and you want me to diagnose and medicate them from what you have just told me. I can't do that! I'll need to examine them!"

"You must not be much of a doctor! I told you what was wrong!" Then I heard a loud click as the phone slammed down.

That woman made it easy for me, I didn't have to say or do anything, but keep cool.

### ANOTHER ODD CALL

And what about one of the many odd calls I get at the office.

I wondered if the lady was congratulating me for winning the election or poking fun at my profession.

It was the day after winning the election for the county commissioner seat. I was to be a county commissioner come January first.

"Doctor Baker, I called to congratulate you on winning the election."

"Thank you."

"With all the extra work the commissioner's job makes for you, will you need another veterinarian?"

"Yes, ma'am. The commissioner's job makes more work for me. I could use another veterinarian, but they are hard to find."

"Doc, I have three more payments and I'll have my degree."

Oh, boy, who do I have on the other end of this telephone?

"Ma'am, I don't understand what you mean, three more payments?"

"Doc, I am taking veterinary courses through the mail and they won't send any more lessons until I make the payments."

This woman really thinks she is going to be a veterinarian through correspondence courses. "Ma'am, who is sending you these courses about veterinary medicine?"

"It's a big outfit with an ad on television. Don't you know about the school?"

"I'm sorry, but I don't."

What do I do -- or say -- now?

"Ma'am, when you get your license from the State of Ohio, stop in for a job."

I still need another veterinarian.

### **SUNDAY MORNING**

What about...? I didn't think what happened on a Sunday morning at eight o'clock would ever be topped.

"Hello, this is Doctor Baker." I am sure I said that although my coming out of a sound sleep makes it quite difficult to remember, especially on a 'sleep-in' Sunday morning.

"This doesn't sound like Doctor Baker!"

"Ma'am, I was sound asleep and it is hard for me to tell what I sound like at this hour on a Sunday morning. How may I help you? I'm awake now."

"I want to know if you are going to be open tomorrow?"

"Yes, ma'am, we open at nine."

"Thank you."

The phone clicked and the dial tone started buzzing in my ear. I laid there wishing I had been awake enough to give the inconsiderate woman a piece of my now fully awake thoughts.

## ANOTHER PHONE CALL

I didn't believe the eight o'clock Sunday morning call could be topped. It was number one on my list for inconsiderate people. I was wrong although it took about five years to have someone come close to topping her. The very same thing happened again but this time the phone started ringing at seven-thirty on a Sunday morning. We still open at nine.

## EMBARRASSMENT

There have been several occasions throughout my career when people have asked me questions about human medicine. I usually get out of answering the questions by telling them my degree covers only animals, not humans. I am flattered, but keep my mouth shut. June, my receptionist of years ago, loved to see me turn red with embarrassment, especially when women were involved. She had another opportunity one day when a lady was telling her about how slow her recent breast surgery was healing. June told the lady to ask Doctor Baker, he could probably help her.

I should have known June was up to something when she kept peeking through the little glass window from her office into the examination room.

Well, the three hundred pound woman had brought her four pound poodle in for its annual physical and vaccinations but she started telling me about her recent breast surgery. I didn't know June had told her to ask me and she didn't know June hadn't told me about the situation. I made every effort I knew to make the lady stop telling me about her breast surgery, but to no avail.

"Ma'am! I really don't know anything about human surgery and can't really comment."

She was wearing what looked like a large maternity blouse and she filled it out like she was ready to deliver at any minute, but she wasn't pregnant.

"Doc, you do surgery every day and should be able to tell me if I am healing okay. The surgery was completed two weeks ago and I think it should be healing much faster than it is. Take a look and see."

Before I had a chance to say I couldn't, I was. She had taken hold of the bottom of her tent-like blouse and tossed it up over her shoulders, revealing the upper half of her bare body.

"Doc, look at this incision! Is it healing the way it should be healing?"

I turned my back to her bare breasts. I wasn't about to make any comments. I figured if I didn't get caught looking I wouldn't be forced into any comments. "Pull your blouse down!"

"Doctor, I embarrassed you and I thought you were just another dirty old man. Your face is redder than any ripe tomato."

"Yes, you embarrassed me! I am a doctor of veterinary medicine and I thank the Lord for not having to work on humans. Do you want me to finish checking your dog?"

### **I DON'T OWN PETS**

We get all kinds of questions but seldom does anyone tell the receptionist they will pay for an office call for only talking to the doctor.

"Doc, there is a cute, young school teacher in the waiting room who just wants to talk to you and she owns no pets. What do I do?"

"June, get her into an examination room and I will see what makes me so important."

"Doctor, I know you are no longer on the school board but you were a member when team teaching started in the fourth grade."

"Yes, I was a school board member when the entire fourth grade class was put into one big room and four teachers circulated around the room. The students were not assigned to one specific teacher and could talk to any or all four of them when they wanted. As a school board member I thought it would cause mass confusion, but the teachers had convinced the principal the experiment was worth a try. Now, what can I help you with?"

"I have been having a problem with the skin on my legs. I have a terrible itch I can't control. I finally went to a dermatologist for some help and he told me that I have a flea allergy."

"I thought you told Mary you didn't have any pets?"

"I don't and that is what I told the dermatologist. He told me I probably had fleas in my carpet but I have solid oak floors. I told him the fourth grade room was fully carpeted and maybe that is where the fleas were coming from."

"I believe it is possible. The kids could carry the flea eggs from their pets on their clothes and these eggs fall off and hatch in the carpet of the Fourth Grade classroom. Have you told your principal?"

"Yes, and they plan on getting the room fumigated when we have a long weekend off. Doc, that is why I am here. The dermatologist told me to wear heavy white kneesocks and a flea collar around each ankle until the room was free of fleas. I need to know what brand of flea collar I should buy and if I can expect any flea collar caused problems?"

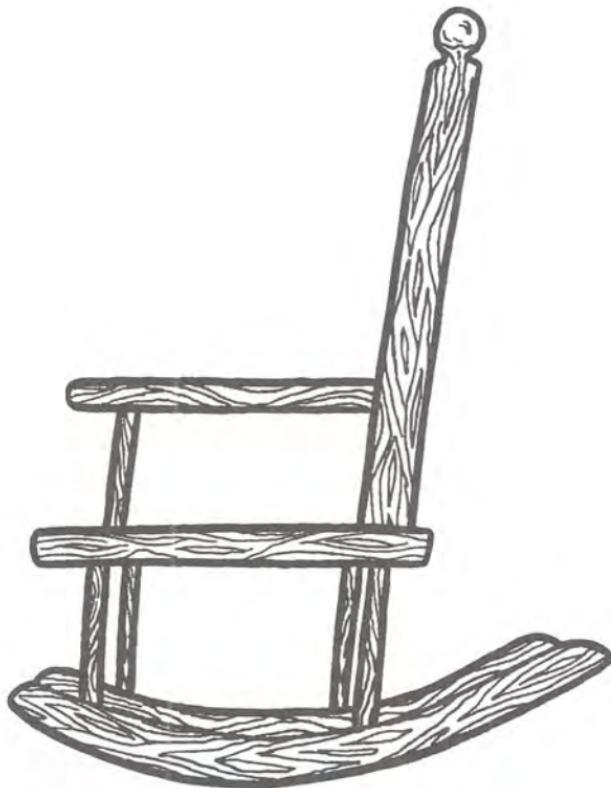
"Your dermatologist should tell you the brand he wants you to wear. I'll suggest that you take the collars off before bathing and don't allow the fourth graders to hook leashes to your collars."

I didn't charge her for an office call.

It's time to quit telling this side of being a veterinarian before you start thinking that everyone is nuts.



# Retirement?



## RETIREMENT

### What Dad Said About Retirement

Let's be honest. Who really cares that I will be sixty-four my next birthday? I do, and my family does, but why should you care? You shouldn't, but when I mention hitting sixty-four I am flooded with advisors on how to retire. I appreciate the sincere advice and must confess the thought of retirement has jumbled my head a little. I have a problem. I've gone through my life thinking I wouldn't make it to sixty and son-of-a-gun, I'll be sixty-four and can't find anything to retire to. Retirement scares me.

Being a veterinary scientist I'll do like I've been trained...if you can't find an answer from one approach try a different approach. Since there is nothing I know of to retire to then what can I retire from? Well...the kids are all grown and educated so I can't retire from them. I've had my veterinary practice for thirty-plus years, and I have a good veterinarian working for me so I can't retire from overwork in my practice. I was recently elected a county commissioner of Lawrence County, Ohio so I don't need to worry about any political campaigns for at least two years. There is no good reason to retire from politics. I doubt that retirement can change any of my arthritic aches and pains which predict a change in the weather better than the weatherman, so I can't retire from aging. It looks like there is nothing to retire from, or retire to, so I'll just keep plodding along.

What did I do throughout all those years that makes the present thoughts of retirement so difficult? I did a little genetic calculating, along with trying to talk Dad into retirement. Those two things must be the culprits for my present personal retirement debate with myself.

Oh, genetics! I remember those courses in genetics and how important those genes are in what and when and where a living thing is going to end up. Years later I took all the scientific training and applied it to the gruesome task of figuring out when I should retire, or when I would probably drop dead at work. Science is wonderful, but often morbid in the conclusions drawn -- like when the 'Here After' will be here. My scientific calculations and reasoning had me concluding I wouldn't live to be sixty. Genetically speaking, I wasn't supposed to have the so-called 'Golden Years' so why even think about planning something special for retirement. I didn't.

Hindsight often reminds me of stupid things I did at a young age. I'm old enough now to blame youth for things I regret doing when I was young. I was worldly young at twenty-seven when I had a serious talk with Dad about his retirement. We were utilizing the comfort of the rocking chairs on his front porch while I was trying to change his mind about taking the high paying job in India. I was in my second year of medical school and talking like some kind of well educated 'know-it-all'. I can shamefully look back at that talk and feel I was being one big fool. Sometimes moms and dads can be so smart by just listening and saying little.

"Dad, you are pushing sixty. You had a very serious heart attack in Italy six years ago and you are very happy here on the farm. Why in the world do you want to go to a country you know nothing about?"

"Carl, I've worked most of my life in the Tin Mill and many people consider me to be an expert on making tin-plated steel. You know I've worked all over the world, in places I didn't know

anything about until I arrived on the job. I've done pretty well for having only an eighth grade education and now our government wants me to go to India to help build a new tin mill. Carl, the United States Government wants me in India because the Russians are in there trying to beat us in making steel. I've had my physical exam and have even taken some of the required shots. I feel pretty good for a fifty-nine year old steel worker and I am wanted in India."

The discussion about retirement ended with one short, but very appropriate, question by Dad.

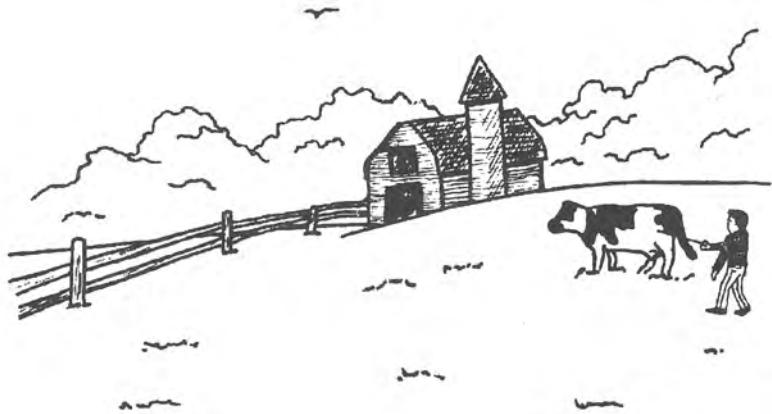
"Carl, what do you want me to do, sit here on the front porch and rock myself to death?"

"Dad, I'll take you to the airport."

Two months later Mom came home alone. The family had gathered and she relayed to us what happened on Dad's final day. "He was telling me how well the mill was coming along as he ate a large breakfast. He was very proud of how the Americans were beating the Russians in the building of the new mill. The chauffeur had picked him up at the hotel as usual and he was off to work." Mom paused to wipe a few tears away before continuing.

"They told me it was his heart....Tom had just gotten out of the car when the attack hit.....He was dead before he hit the ground."

    Mom and Dad are both gone....Bless Their Souls....As they look down on me I give a belated thank you. Thank you for the genes and your wisdom which has guided me. I'll continue in 'God's Master Plan' of being a veterinarian and writing.



My goofy veterinary experiences brought a variety of mixed reader responses. Oh Well.....

C.T.B.

"Doc, you're not James Harriot but each of your stories held my attention to the unexpected endings."

L.M. Ironton, OH

"Doc, you have a book in each short story. Is that my wife in the story about all of the cats in the house? No! It couldn't be her but it sounds like something she would do."

R.S. Huntington, WV

"Doc, no one would do the things you said they did but you're not smart enough to make up such goofy stories."

M.H. Denver, CO

"We liked all your stories, but especially the story about the old man calling you out to doctor his cow and then wouldn't let you touch her when you got to his barn."

M.J. and D.B.,

